
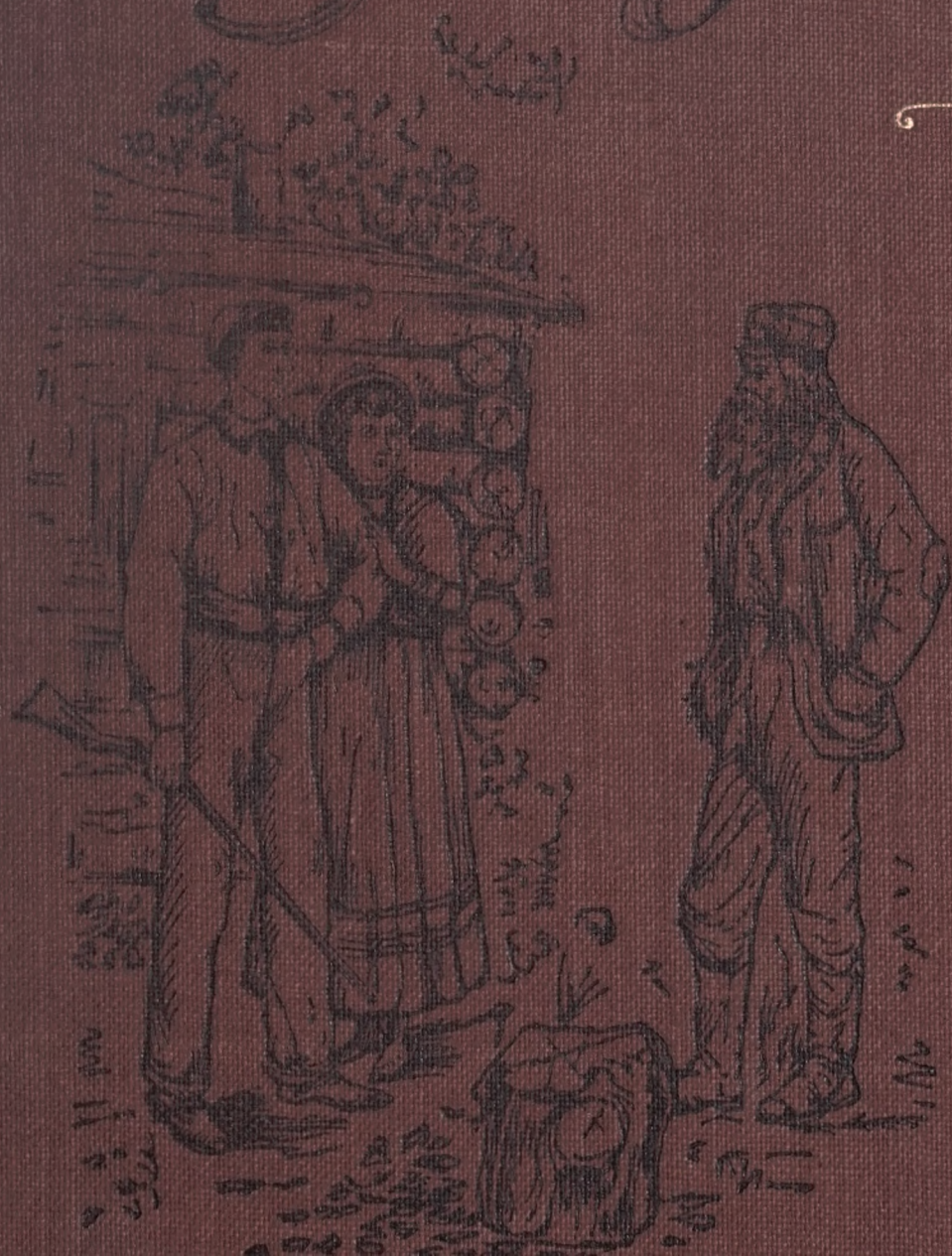


# BERTHA'S · SUMMER-BOARDERS

By   
LINNIE  
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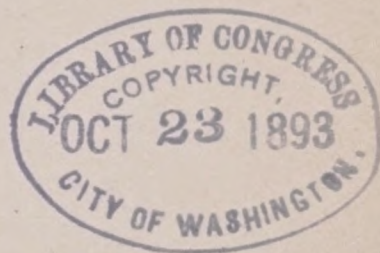




# BERTHA'S SUMMER BOARDERS

BY

LINNIE S. <sup>*Sarah*</sup> HARRIS



*50959Y*

BOSTON:

Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society.

*(1893)*



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# BERTHA'S SUMMER BOARDERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE LETTER.

BERTHA WHITE sat in the back door looking out over the fields whose tall, waving grass was ready for the scythe. Behind her the fire she had just kindled in the cook-stove crackled cheerfully, and the teakettle began to hum. Before her the level green field stretched away to meet the road which led to the village, whose slender church spire she could see through the trees. Bertha had not sat down in the door to admire the view, for she had watched those fields, and the broad, white country road which skirted them for twenty-four years, through winter's snow and summer's heat, and, dearly as she loved them, she was too practical a young woman to sit down just at supper time to admire a familiar scene.



While she was waiting for the kettle to boil and the tea to steep, she had dropped down onto the doorstep to re-read a letter she had received in the afternoon mail. It was not very long, and having finished reading it she folded it up, and leaning her chin on her hand gazed thoughtfully at the old-fashioned well curb, with its long sweep, which stood about a stone's throw from the door.

"Oh, dear!" said she, with a long-drawn sigh. "I wonder if it will pay?" Bertha was always asking that question. She never bought a new dress without first testing the material to see if it would pay for the buying, for the White girls' dresses had to last more than one season.

"We do need the money so much," she went on, talking to herself for lack of any one else to speak to, "but I dread the extra work. I am so tired of the dreary round of housework. Washing Monday, ironing Tuesday, cooking Wednesday, mending Thursday, sweeping and cleaning Friday, and cooking again Saturday, go to church on Sunday — then begin and go all over it again the next week. But the money would be lots of help next fall. It could go towards Joe's new overcoat. The poor boy must have one, for he



has entirely outgrown his old one. It is so hard to get money in the fall! I'll do it if father is willing; I can stand the extra work for his sake and the children's. Here comes Harry at last! Dear me! how shabby she looks! I wonder if I shall ever get her new dress done?"

Up the dusty road came a girl swinging a couple of books fastened together by a strap, and whistling like a boy. When she reached the stone wall she jumped over, and, instead of going up the lane to the front of the house, followed a well-worn path through the field to the back door.

"Have you had to stay after school again, Harry?" asked Bertha, as her sister dropped down upon the step at her feet.

"No, J. Murry don't get me in that trap more than once a week. I have been a model of propriety all day. I stopped at Nan's on the way home."

"What did you do that for?" asked her sister. "You know I told you that you could help me on your dress after school."

"Why, so you did," said the girl. "I forgot all about it."



"What an inconvenient memory you have got, Harry," said her sister. "I should think you might have interest enough in your own dress to help me with it when you can."

"Why, so should I," replied Harry sighing, as she leaned her chin on her hand. "But how can I help things going right out of my mind entirely?"

"You should not let things go out of your mind," said Bertha severely. "It is time you took an interest in things about the house, for you are in your eighteenth year, and are no longer a child."

"Oh, Bird, don't say that," interrupted her sister. "Just for a change tell me I am seventeen. It's so tiresome hearing the same thing every day."

"If you would try and improve, you wouldn't have to hear the same thing every day," said the elder sister.

"'Variety is the spice of life,'" the other replied. "We have talked on one subject so long it has become monotonous. Who is that letter from?"

"Cousin Ella Preston."



“How did it happen that she remembered there was a family by the name of White down in the wilds of Maine?”

“She has not forgotten us, Harry,” said Bertha reprovingly.

“Oh, has n’t she?” said Harry, tossing her head. “I should think she would. The easiest way to dispose of troublesome poor relations is to forget them.”

“We are not troublesome poor relations,” said Bertha indignantly.

“But we may become troublesome if she remembers us,” said Harry mischievously. “If she shows too much interest in us you may brace up and ask for a set of furs or some other trifle that you would like to have.”

“Yes, it would be very much like me,” said Bertha, rising and going into the kitchen to take off the teakettle, which was sending out a cloud of steam.

“Rich relations in books are always so nice,” Harry continued, still sitting in the door. “When the heroine wants a new dress, up comes a smiling cousin with a whole wardrobe for her; when she sighs for a piano, a benevolent uncle trots one



out at once; and when she has everything her heart desires but a trip to Europe, a rich aunt asks her to go round the world with her. I don't think the Prestons act up to the light they receive from Sunday-school books."

"The Prestons are only our second cousins, Harry," replied Bertha, cutting the bread for tea. "Where did Joe go after school?"

"After the cows," Harry replied. "O Bird! the girls are coming out here strawberrying Saturday; can I ask them to stay to tea?"

"I don't know. Wait till Saturday comes," replied her busy sister. "I wish you would go out into the barn and see if you can find some eggs."

Harry rose slowly, and leaving her books in the doorway, obeyed her sister's request. Bertha White had been mistress of her father's house ever since her mother died. She was only seventeen then; but she had taken her place as house-keeper and kept it ever since. Every one thought it the natural thing for her to do, and no one dreamed of its being any sacrifice, least of all Bertha; and yet for a young girl to take the care of a family on her shoulders, and willingly deprive



herself of a great many pleasures and advantages, was a hard thing to do.

Bertha had spent the best part of her life in the daily round of household cares, and had devoted her girlhood to her father and younger brother and sister without a murmur. She had never been farther from home than the limits of her own county. She had no accomplishments but house work and dressmaking, and few pleasures. Though people pitied her, very few thought of what she had so cheerfully given up for the sake of others. She was a quiet little body, and, unlike other girls, spent neither time nor money on her personal appearance. Though cutting and making her own dresses, as well as her sister's, she had but little time to give them fancy touches; and in spite of the rage for crimps and bangs, she combed her dark brown hair back perfectly plain off from her forehead. Under her level eyebrows shone a pair of dark gray eyes. She had left school when she was seventeen, and though very fond of reading she had not been able to indulge in it on account of the endless washing, cooking, and sewing. She often felt that her education was sadly deficient.



Bertha was seven years older than Harry and Joe, the twin brother and sister.

Harry's real name was Harriet, but as she had always been something of a boy, she had adopted one of their names. It was hard to believe that Harry and Bertha were sisters, for the former was one of those girls who always make a stir, and never move without creating a little breeze. At school she was usually the ringleader in all the mischief, and where she sat was sure to be the noisiest part of the room. She rarely failed in recitation, however, for she was quick as a flash, and could learn a lesson in a very short time. At home she was heedless, lazy, and a little selfish. Though her sister lectured her about her bad habits, she still continued to spoil her.

The two sisters did not resemble each other in the least. Harry was a tall, slim girl with wild, wayward brown hair, which she wore in a knot of curls tied in her neck, a pair of dark blue eyes, almost black, rosy cheeks, and a roguish, dimpled mouth. Her brother Joe was her constant companion, and looked as much like her as it is possible for a boy to look like a girl.

Bertha waited until the family were gathered



around the tea table before she said anything about the matter which had engaged her thoughts when she sat in the backdoor.

Mr. White was a grave, silent man, who said but little as he drank his two cups of tea, but he listened to his children's chatter with a grave, quiet smile playing round the corner of his mouth.

"Father," Bertha began, plunging into her business at once, "I have had an offer to take summer boarders."

"Have you?" Mr. White replied as though he thought that nothing strange.

Joe relieved his feelings, however, by exclaiming: "I should smile to see you doing it."

"Cousin Ella Preston has written to me," Bertha continued, "and asked me if I would take her and her aunt, Miss Moore, to board for the summer. She says her health is not very good, and the doctor has advised her to go to some quiet place, and she wants to come here."

"That was what was in the letter then!" exclaimed Harry. "They remember their poor relations when they want a place to board."

"Why do you talk that way, Harry?" asked her sister impatiently. "We are not poor relations!"



We are only second cousins, which is hardly any relation at all."

"We don't want our second cousins here," Harry declared, "and you can write and tell them so."

"I hardly think I shall," replied Bertha quietly.

"You are not thinking of taking them!" cried Harry in dismay, while Joe exclaimed:—

"Here 's a jolly go!"

"Joe, your slang grows worse every day!" said his sister. "If I could find a school where it is not taught in all its branches, I would send you there at once. What do you think of the plan, father?"

"You are the one to decide, Bertha," replied Mr. White. "Won't it make you extra work?"

"I have been thinking of that," said Bertha slowly. "Kezia Wilder would come for the summer, and not charge much, and it would make a change for me. And, besides, the money would be very nice to have next fall."

Harry leaned back in her chair, and looked reproachfully at her sister.

"Kezia won't come," said Joe, "for fear father



will fall in love with her, and she won't be able to return his affections."

A quiet smile passed over Mr. White's face, but he made no reply to his son's irreverence.

"We never use the front chamber," Bertha continued, "and with plenty of milk and eggs, I think I can make it pay."

"How old is Ella?" asked her father.

"My age, twenty-four."

"How old is the Moore?" asked Joe.

"Miss Moore," replied his sister reprovingly, "is an old lady."

"An old maid! Whew! I shall have to vamose," declared Joe. "I'll go out West. It's time I started to do something for myself, and now that my sister fills the house with strangers, I shall be driven to take refuge in the bleak world,"—and he finished with a profound sigh.

"I could stand the old lady," said Harry, "but I don't want a rich, fashionable girl to come here and make fun of us and our home."

"I am not ashamed of the house," replied Bertha, "and Ella is not the kind of a girl that makes fun. If you have no objections, father, I will go



down and see Kezia to-night. They would like to know as soon as possible."

"Do just as you please, my daughter," said Mr. White rising. "You are the one to decide."

"And we are not worth considering," pouted Harry.

"Send word to Kezia that you won't fall in love with her, father, so that she will feel safe about coming."

"Stop your nonsense, my son," said his father, as sternly as he was ever known to speak, "and come out and attend to the milking."

All the time Bertha was stepping back and forth between the dining room and kitchen, clearing off the table, washing the dishes and scalding the milk pans, she was planning the delicious things she would make for the table, and how she would fix up the front chamber, and arrange the furniture in the parlor so that the carpet would not show how worn and faded it was.

When the last thing was done, and she had hung her apron up behind the door, Bertha put on her hat and gloves, and started for Kezia Wilder's.

Mr. White's house stood just outside the vil-



lage of Oakland, and was surrounded by its own green fields. A grass-grown lane, bordered with trees, led down to the road, where a wooden gate, which was very seldom closed day or night, marked the entrance.

Bertha walked along the dusty road which gave out no footfall, listening to the robins singing their evening song, and the bobolinks calling to each other down in the meadow, in the sweet June twilight. On reaching the village she followed the wooden sidewalk to Kezia's dwelling.

Kezia was an independent spinster who lived in her own little house except when she was called away to accommodate some neighbor. She would have been highly offended if any one had called her a servant, but if any one was troubled about getting "help," she would stay with them until a girl was found. In sickness she was invaluable. There was hardly a person in town whom she had not nursed.

Seated by the open window in Kezia's little cane-seated rocking-chair, Bertha told her plans, and asked her hostess if she would accommodate her for the summer.

"I want to know if you are going to take sum-



mer boarders, Bertha White!" Kezia exclaimed, when her guest finished.

"I am, if you will help me," Bertha replied. "I can't do the work alone."

"Of course you can't," Kezia declared. "Boarders make a sight of work, no mistake. But I don't know as I could shut up the house for the summer," — and Kezia glanced fondly around the little room with its gay rag carpet and cane-seated chairs. "Then you live so far out of the village. It 's a long walk down to church from your house."

It did not seem long to Bertha, but then she had walked it all her life.

"I know it is a greet deal to ask of you," she replied. "Our house will seem lonely to you, where you are used to the village; but perhaps you won't mind it so very much in summer."

"I shan't mind the lonesomeness," said Miss Wilder, "don't you fret about that. But you know how I feel about your father's being a widower."

"I am sure, Kezia, no one will think anything about that," Bertha assured her gravely.

"People will talk," said Kezia with a solemn



shake of the head, "and though I know your pa never thinks of marrying again, there will be plenty at the sewing society to say that I am in hopes he will change his mind."

"You can go early every week, Kezia," Bertha proposed, "and then they can't talk about you."

"But they will talk somewhere else," replied Kezia, as one who knew the failings of her sister woman; "but I don't care for 'em. Your pa was bound up in your ma, and will never marry again, I know. You don't favor your ma much, but Harry is the very image of her."

"Then you will come," said Bertha eagerly.

"I hate to be disobliging," replied Kezia; "but city folks are dreadful particular about some things, and may have notions about my setting at the table with 'em."

"These ladies will not," said Bertha decidedly. "They are my cousins; at least the young lady is, and I am sure they will respect your position."

Thus surmounting all obstacles and objections, Bertha at last persuaded Miss Wilder to accommodate her for the summer, and after arranging the terms, she bade her good-by and returned home.



On the doorstep she found Harry.

"Is Kezia coming?" she asked.

"Yes," Bertha replied; "she consented after a while."

"Then good-by to peace and happiness for the rest of the summer!"

"Why will you talk so, Harry?" said Bertha, sitting down beside her sister. "You know I would not do anything to destroy your peace and happiness. You will like Ella, and enjoy having her here."

"Enjoy having a fashionable young lady here, turning up her nose at everything!" exclaimed Harry, turning up her own similar property.

"Ella will not do anything of the kind," Bertha declared indignantly.

"Wait and see," said Harry wisely.

"*You* wait and see. I know Ella, and you don't," and rising, Bertha went into the sitting-room and lit the lamp.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE NEW COUSIN.

MISS WILDER came the day before the boarders were expected, to help Bertha get ready for them. Joe went after her with the wagon in order to bring up her trunk, and about eight o'clock Friday evening, Harry, from her favorite perch in one of the old apple trees, saw them coming up the road, with Miss Wilder's property in the back of the wagon.

"She kissed the cat good-by," said Joe, as his sister came out into the barn to help him unharness Bob White, the family steed, "and made me nail a board across the gate to keep the cows out of the yard. But did n't I scare her coming up!" and the bad boy chuckled gleefully.

"What did you do?" asked Harry.

"Told her the boys would get her black currants. She was up a tree in a minute. But I



told her not to worry, for I would keep my eye on them," and he chuckled again as he took Bob White out of the thills.

The next morning Kezia and Bertha rose with the sun, and were soon deep in the mysteries of cooking.

Harry watched the pile of good things accumulating on the pantry shelves, and carried specimens of the flaky tarts and crisp, brown doughnuts out to Joe, who had to spend his holiday hoeing potatoes.

In the afternoon they got the boarders' rooms ready. Bertha thought them nearly perfect, but Harry threw cold water on her enthusiasm when she came upstairs to honor them with her inspection.

"Ella will complain because it eaves down," said she. "She won't be able to breathe in it, they have so much air in Boston, you know."

"She can camp in the orchard then," said Bertha, who was tying back the full white curtains with blue ribbon. "She will find plenty of air out there."

"The looking-glass is n't large enough to reflect the whole of her at once," continued Harry,



regarding her own image in the little mirror over the toilet table.

“Then she can order a full length mirror,” said Bertha, “and leave it behind her when she goes away. It would be very nice for us.”

“Bertha White!” exclaimed her sister. “I believe the mere thought of taking summer boarders has deprived you of all your proper pride!” and having come to this sad conclusion, the young lady left the room.

Joe was to go to the station after the travelers, and though he professed not to care a rush for city folks, he put on his best clothes, and spent so much time tying his necktie and trying to get the kink out of his curly mop, that Bertha was afraid the whistle would blow before he left the house.

Harry would not go with him, to his great disgust, for she had just been voted into the choir, which was considered a great honor by the young people, and thought the rehearsal for church the next day of more importance than anything else.

She was not above curiosity, however, and when she took off her things in the hall on her return from the rehearsal she wondered very much what the new boarders were like as she regarded a



broad-brimmed black hat, and a gold-handled umbrella, in its neat case.

She did not see the ladies that night, for they had gone to their rooms, and she restrained herself with difficulty from asking questions.

Sunday morning was a dream of beauty, and Harry was up bright and early, hunting hens' eggs in the barn. She had just left them with Kezia at the kitchen door, when she saw Joe, just returned from driving the cows to pasture, taking a brief respite from his labors out under the apple trees at the end of the house.

"Well," said she, sitting down on the grass beside him, "what are they like?"

"Who do you mean?" returned Joe provokingly.

"The boarders, of course," said Harry impatiently.

"If you had gone to the station last night you would have known," said Joe, calmly nibbling a spear of grass.

"Now don't tease," Harry coaxed. "I am just consumed with curiosity. What does Ella look like?"

"She 's a daisy," declared Joe emphatically.



"Is she pretty?" asked Harry doubtfully. "Boston girls are most always plain."

"Well, she is n't," declared Joe, who had evidently sworn fidelity to the stranger. "She's a clipper, I tell you."

"I thought she was sick," said Harry. "What is the matter with her?"

"Studied too much Greek and Sanscrit," said Joe calmly. "All Boston girls do."

"What does her aunt look like?" asked Harry, determined to satisfy her curiosity.

"She wears a chignon, which looks very classic, and eyeglasses like this," and Joe tried to balance a chip across his nose.

"I know she will be just horrid," declared Harry. "I don't see what Bird wants them here for. She will get enough of them before the summer is over, I guess."

"This is the way she'll talk," and arranging his brown poll *à la* Boston chignon, Joe struck a sentimental attitude before the apple trees, murmuring: "Those round, symmetrical limbs are no longer distressingly nude, but are clothed with graceful foliage, and the charming, geometrical spectacle against the ethereal blue is dispelled."



It is inspiring to roam about the country, and inspect your engrafted fruit trees, Mr. White!"

Here a clapping of hands, accompanied by a merry laugh, caused Joe to tumble off his high horse, and turning hastily round, the twins, to their great dismay, saw that the chamber window was open, and the young lady boarder was leaning out.

"What fun you are having!" she called. "Wait a minute and I'll come down."

"Jiminy!" cried Joe, as the head left the window. "Scatter 's the word!"

"You sha'n't run away," declared Harry, holding on to her twin in affliction. "You are the one who was making fun, and you sha'n't back out and leave me to bear the blame."

"I'll stay and tell what I was doing," he replied, "and just add for your benefit that you can't bear her, and wish she was farther."

"Hush!" said Harry with a frown, for the object of their conversation was coming round the corner of the house dressed in a morning wrapper which caused Harry to open mouth as well as eyes in astonishment and admiration.

"Good morning!" said the newcomer gayly.



"Is n't it lovely out here? What were you having so much fun about? I heard you laughing before I opened my window."

"We were talking about apple trees," said Joe gravely.

The young lady looked up at the gnarled old fruit trees, as if she wondered what they found so amusing in them, but she only said: —

"You are my cousin Harry, are you not? I did not see you last night."

Harry did not know what to say as the young lady held out her hand and kissed her warmly, but she was sure she had never seen any one as pretty as this new cousin with her shining, wavy hair, smiling brown eyes, slender, white hands, and more than all the rest, the dainty wrapper with its long train and delicate ribbons. She felt very awkward and plain beside her, and could not open her lips.

"What fine times you two must have!" the new cousin went on. "I envy you like everything, for I have always longed for a brother just my own age. Cliff is growing so tall now he does pretty well, but he is nothing but a boy still."

"How old is Cliff?" asked Joe, becoming interested as in a kindred spirit.



"Cliff is nineteen, and is taller than you, I think," said the young lady, thus causing Joe to throw his shoulders back, remembering that Bertha often cautioned him about stooping.

"He is in the second company, so you see he is quite tall, and he is captain, too, so, of course, that has made him grow a head taller—in his own estimation at least."

Harry was strongly impressed with the picture of such a splendid creature, and Joe thought, enviously, that it was a fine thing to live in the city, and wondered what the Boston chap would think of a fellow who had to hoe potatoes on the only holiday in the week, and drive cows night and morning.

Just then the clarion voice of Kezia announced breakfast from the kitchen door, and nothing more was said.

Sunday breakfast at the Whites' always consisted of brown bread and beans, but this morning, as Harry followed the young lady boarder into the dining room, with her eyes fixed on the train of that wonderful wrapper, she wished that Bertha had had something else; their favorite dish would look so countrified to Ella.



Miss Moore made her appearance at the breakfast table; and Harry, who always made up her mind in a twinkling whether she liked a person or not, took a violent dislike to her the moment she was introduced. Miss Moore was a somewhat stiff maiden lady, with gray side curls, which naughty Harry declared were false, and gold-bowed eyeglasses, through which she stared in a way that was very trying to nervous people.

"This is my sister Harry, Miss Moore," said Bertha, as the girl entered the room.

Up went the eyeglasses, and Harry was the victim of the most decided stare she had ever encountered.

"Harry!" exclaimed the lady, letting the glasses drop on the slender gold chain on which they hung. "That must be an abbreviation."

"Her real name is Harriet," explained Bertha, flushing a little.

"Ah, indeed!" and Miss Moore turned from Harry to her coffee cup as though she had no further interest in so insignificant a human being. "Where have you been this morning, Ella?" she asked her niece. "I went into your room and found it empty."



"I ran down into the orchard," replied the young lady. "It is such a glorious morning, I wanted to get out-of-doors as soon as possible."

"It was very imprudent," said her aunt gravely. "You must remember what the doctor said."

"No, auntie, I am going to forget the doctor and his tiresome sayings," her niece replied. "I am sure I shall have no use for him down here."

"But it was very damp," Miss Moore persisted. "You should not step out on the ground when it is wet with dew."

"My land!" spoke up Kezia, "the sun has been up these four hours: I guess the dew is dry if it is ever going to be."

Up went Miss Moore's eyeglasses again, and Kezia was treated to a prolonged stare, which she received with an indignant sniff. Having satisfied herself what species of animal Kezia belonged to, Miss Moore dropped her glasses and went on with her breakfast.

"Auntie has come down here to take care of me," said Ella merrily; "but I am afraid she will have her hands full."

Harry fervently wished that the elder lady might find her niece such a troublesome charge that she



would give it up, and return on the next train to Boston. She did not stop to think of what her sister would lose thereby, for girls of seventeen are not very practical.

After breakfast, while Bertha strained the milk, Harry helped Kezia with the dishes; and all the while she was wiping and putting them away she poured her admiration of Ella into Kezia's ears.

"Don't you think she is lovely, Kezia?" said she for the sixth time.

"I don't see nothing lovely about her," said Kezia, splashing round in the dishwater; "but she ain't bad looking."

"She is just as pretty as she can be!" said Harry warmly. "Who would think she was as old as Bird? She does n't look a day over eighteen, does she?"

"Your sister is a sensible-looking girl, Harry White," retorted Kezia, with whom Bertha was a favorite, "and don't try to make herself look sixteen when she is twenty-five."

"Ella does n't either, I know," said Harry indignantly. "It is natural for her to look young when her hair is so curly and goldy, and her com-



plexion so pink-and-white; and then her wrapper — O Kezia! did you notice her wrapper? It was made like a court dress, with a long plait in the back, and came up high in the neck in one of those rolling collars.”

“There, there!” exclaimed Kezia impatiently. “You are bewitched, just as I knew you’d be, with a dress with a long tail to it. Do carry those dishes away, or you won’t get through and dressed in time for church.”

The boarders did not go out, to Harry’s disappointment, for she wanted her friends to see her pretty, stylish cousin, but stayed in their own rooms most of the day, resting from their journey. The family attended church, and the twins went to Sunday school; but in spite of these services the day was a long one, and at four o’clock, when Joe started to go after the cows, Harry proposed going with him.

“You must change your dress, then,” said Bertha, who was indulging in the luxury of a book before supper time. She had laid aside her own black cashmere, and had put on one of her neat calicoes to do up the night work in.

Harry grumbled, but obeyed her sister; and,



putting on her school dress, joined Joe, who was in the barn door whittling.

Just as they started for the pasture a new voice hailed them, and, looking round, they saw Ella with her hat in her hand coming out the front door.

"Can't I go with you?" she asked. "I have been in the house all day, and am just aching for a walk."

"We are going after the cows," said Harry. "That is, I was, but I will go with you now."

"Why can't I go after the cows too?" asked Ella. "I have always thought that it must be fun to drive them."

Harry stared in astonishment at hearing a young lady from Boston say that she should like to drive cows, but said cordially: —

"All right. Come on then;" and the three started for the pasture.

Harry did not feel quite at her ease at first, and let Joe do most of the talking. He was not afraid of his cousin; for clothes do not stand in a boy's way, and Joe did not feel awkward in his school clothes because his companion was dressed in soft white flannel, trimmed with broad braid. Harry,



however, could not help thinking how homely and shabby she must look beside her, until she became so interested in the conversation that she forgot all about dress. .

They found the cows waiting at the pasture bars.

"Will you please wait till I get over this fence before you let down the bars?" asked Ella. "I don't like cows very near."

"Oh, they won't hurt you," said Joe, without offering to tease, as he would have done if a country girl had made a similar confession. "They are perfectly harmless; would n't hurt a fly."

Nevertheless, Ella kept close to the fence, and made Harry stand in front of her while the peaceful herd ambled into the lane, snatching at the wayside grass as they passed. When they were safely started for home, she bravely followed, stopping every once in a while to pick the gay wild flowers, which the brother and sister passed by indifferently every day of their lives.

By the time they reached the house the three were as good friends as though they had known each other for a lifetime.

"Well, Harry," said Bertha that night, as they



went up to their own room, "do you think my boarders will entirely destroy your happiness this summer?"

"Ella is perfectly lovely!" declared Harry; "but, as Kezia says, 'if you don't have trouble with the old lady, I 'll miss my guess.' "



## CHAPTER III.

## THE WEDNESDAY EVENING MEETING.

HARRY was not the only one who fell in love with Ella, for they all liked her. Mr. White thought her a very intelligent young lady; Kezia owned that she had her good points; Joe was her most devoted slave, and would have cut off his head and presented it to her on a charger had she demanded such a sacrifice. But the other new member of the family did not prove so agreeable.

Miss Moore was not a person who tried to please, and without trying she fell very far short of succeeding.

"Mark my words, you 'll have trouble with her," Kezia had said when she felt the power of the gold-bowed eyeglasses; and it soon proved that she was a true prophetess.

Monday was a bright, hot day, pleasant enough for those who had nothing to do but stay in the



shade and keep cool; but for those who had to bend over the washtub it was intolerable. It seemed to Bertha as though she and Kezia would never get the last thing done.

After dinner she was dragging her aching limbs upstairs, when Miss Moore's door opened, and that lady came out.

"I was just going in search of you," said she, on seeing Bertha. "But I can speak to you here just as well."

Bertha took hold of the baluster and wondered uneasily what was coming.

Miss Moore went on benignly: "You are not accustomed to city people, my dear, and do not fully understand their needs, which is perfectly natural, as you have always lived in this little place, and have never taken boarders before. I thought a few suggestions would not come amiss."

"No, ma'am," said Bertha faintly, wondering what was coming. "I would be glad to have you tell me what is wrong."

"It is the feather beds," replied Miss Moore. "It is impossible for me to sleep on one. I am quite worn out from the effects of the last two



nights. I have refrained from speaking until now, but I can not endure in silence any longer."

"I am very sorry," said Bertha with a sigh, "but there is not a mattress in the house."

"You should have made every arrangement for your boarders' comfort, my dear, before you sent word for them to come," said Miss Moore sweetly. "You are young and inexperienced, and we will make all due allowance."

"I did not know that you objected to feather beds," said Bertha, "or I should have got a mattress."

"Your ignorance is perfectly excusable," replied Miss Moore; "and if you have no mattresses we will try and endure the feather beds until some can be obtained from Boston."

"It will not be necessary to send there," said Bertha, flushing a little. "I can get one for you to-morrow."

"I am glad the matter can be so easily arranged," said the lady, brightening. "But there is another little matter. Do you not know that it is not customary for servants to eat at the first table?"

"O Miss Moore, do you mean Kezia?" asked Bertha.



"I refer to that person," replied the lady, "who is so familiar with her superiors."

"But Kezia is not a servant," Bertha explained, "but is an old friend who has kindly consented to help me this summer."

"I thought from her position that she was a servant," said the lady stiffly. "I think it would be much better to have her understand that she is to sit at the second table."

"I can not ask Kezia to do that even for you, Miss Moore," said Bertha with dignity. "She is an old friend whom I can not insult."

"It must be very inconvenient to have old friends working in your kitchen. But I will say no more," and with a majestic gesture of the hand Miss Moore stepped inside her own door.

Bertha escaped to her own chamber, half inclined to cry; but after she had bathed her hot face, and put on a fresh, cool dress, she felt better, and could afford to smile at Miss Moore and her feather bed.

She was going downstairs when Ella called her.

"Won't you come in? You have not seen my room since I unpacked. I am beginning to feel at home. Come in and see how I look."



The young lady had been taking a nap, and now, arrayed in a white dressing-sack with pink ribbons, was combing her hair, while her curler was heating over a lighted lamp.

Bertha accepted the invitation, and entered the pretty chamber which she had arranged with such care for her cousin. It did not look as it had Saturday afternoon when she had given it its finishing touches. Photographs were stuck into the looking-glass, pinned on the wall, and tucked into odd corners. Books, piles of them it seemed to Bertha, some in paper covers, some in pretty bindings, stood on the table; a banjo case filled one corner; over the looking-glass was draped a pale blue silk scarf; and on the toilet table was a mirror in a pretty frame, ivory-handled brushes and combs, and bright silver manicure instruments which filled Bertha with wonder. Among these dainty trifles she also noticed a little gilt-edged book marked with the letters Y. P. S. C. E.; while under the looking-glass was a square gilt-edged card with "Active Members' Pledge" in large letters on it, and more in finer print which she could not read. These letters caught her eye and held it, for she knew they were the initial



letters of a society which people who lived out in the world knew all about and enjoyed. She had read of the organization and rapid, wonderful growth of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, and would have liked to question Ella about it, but was afraid of betraying her ignorance in regard to things which her cousin knew all about; so she watched Ella and said nothing about the pretty card and little gilt-edged book which had attracted her attention as soon as she entered the room.

It was a pleasure to watch Ella as she coiled her long shining hair, and then taking up her curler began to create the many fluffy curls which just shaded her white forehead.

"It must be nice," Bertha thought with a small sigh of envy, "to be able to make one's self look so pretty."

But she did not dream that she, even by means of a curler, could make her hair look like Ella's, for Bertha considered herself very plain.

"There, now, I am ready," said Ella, turning from the glass at last. "Now we can take a book and sit out under the apple trees. Have you read many of these?"



Bertha was bending lovingly over the books, thinking how tempting they looked. Some of them she had seen advertised, and longed to read; but now that they were before her, she must not yield to the temptation.

"I can't read," said she firmly, laying down the book which she had taken up, "for I have got to mend Joe's jacket this afternoon."

Bertha did not see the glance of pity her cousin gave her as she took up the book she laid down, saying, —

"Which had you rather I would do, help you with the sewing, or read aloud?"

"Oh, you could n't help me with Joe's old coat," laughed Bertha.

"Then I'll read to you," replied Ella promptly. "Come! I love to read aloud, and am perfectly happy when I have some one to listen."

To Bertha it seemed the height of luxury to sit out under the apple trees and listen to her cousin read aloud from one of those delightful books, as fresh and charming as the summer day about them; but she was afraid it made her lazy, for when Joe's coat was finished she leaned back in the little rocking-chair they had brought out under the trees, and did nothing.



“You must be tired,” said she when Ella laid down her book. “How selfish of me to keep you reading all this time!”

“Not selfish a bit,” declared Ella, “for I love to read aloud. But, tell me, do you work as hard as this every day?”

“Why, I have n’t worked hard to-day,” replied Bertha, “for I have had Kezia to help me.”

“But after working all the morning, do you have to sew all the afternoon?” asked Ella, glancing at the jacket which had tumbled onto the ground.

“Oh, yes,” replied Bertha cheerfully. “There is always a stitch to be taken somewhere. Joe has a fine faculty for tearing his clothes; and Harry, poor child, — with all my efforts I can not keep her anything but shabby.”

“And you are just my age!” exclaimed Ella.

“You seem a great deal younger than I,” Bertha replied. “I grew old young, and feel about forty now. All the girls of my age are married and gone, and you don’t know how nice it seems to have a cousin who has not the appendage of a husband to engross all her thoughts. I think I shall enjoy this summer.”



"I hope so," said Ella thoughtfully. "But you must grow young again, Bertha, for I feel almost childish beside you."

"I 'll try to," laughed Bertha. "But you must excuse me now, I must go and see about supper. Kezia went down town, and has not got back."

That evening Ella brought her banjo downstairs, and, sitting in a low camp chair out under the trees, with her little feet crossed in front of her, sang song after song, twanging an accompaniment on her instrument.

Miss Moore was persuaded that her niece was sowing the seeds of consumption, and sent out a shawl, which she ordered her to put on. But the others were highly entertained. Mr. White dropped his paper to listen, and Kezia clicked her knitting-needles in time with the banjo-strings, ejaculating, "Well, I do declare!" at every new tune.

Ella enjoyed the pleasure she was giving, and sang with a zest, while the moon, shining through the leaves of the apple trees, cast fantastic shadows over her, and the blossoms filled the air with fragrance.

Joe and Harry were delighted with the songs;



and while the former beat time with his foot, Harry hummed in an undertone, wishing she had a banjo and could play on it as Ella did.

"I say!" said Joe suddenly, "do you know 'McGinty'?"

"O Joe!" exclaimed Ella. "How dare you hint that I can sing that! Shades of immortal Boston! What would the inhabitants say to such a performance?"

"I bet you can!" declared Joe. "Try and see if you can't."

"Promise that you will never mention it," said she; "for if it should be told of, I'm afraid they would banish me from polite society."

"I'll keep mum," promised Joe. "Go ahead. You are among friends, all as deep as Jacob's well."

Thus encouraged, Ella sang the popular song through from beginning to end, much to Joe's delight. She had hardly finished when a window over her head opened and a voice called out:—

"Ella Preston, I can not allow you to persist in such an injurious practice as singing in the open air. What did the doctor tell you?"

"I am done now, auntie," said Ella meekly.



"Then do come into the house," Miss Moore implored. "The dew is falling, and the grass is damp."

"I do wish Nan had come up this evening," said Harry as they followed Ella into the sitting-room.

"Who is Nan?" asked her cousin with interest.

"My chum," Harry replied. "She wants to know you, but she is bashful."

"Give Miss Nan my compliments," said Ella, "and tell her that I am not at all formidable, and that the nearer one gets to me the less terrible I become."

"Oh, I told her there was no need to be afraid of you," said Joe frankly, "and that timid as I was, you did n't scare me."

"That is your opinion of me, is it? Well, I am glad that I don't inspire awe in your youthful breast. Yes, auntie, I am coming," and she ran upstairs in answer to Miss Moore's call.

The next day it rained, and to Harry's great disappointment there could be no moonlight concert out under the apple trees; and Wednesday evening, Ella, instead of bringing down her banjo, declared her intention of going to prayer meeting with Bertha.



"I have n't been to a prayer meeting for a long time," said she eagerly, "so I am real glad you are going. I'll run upstairs and get ready."

"I should think she was going to a party," pouted Harry in the kitchen door. "What does she want to go to that stupid prayer meeting for?"

"You need a work of grace in your own heart, Harriet White," said Kezia, at the sink washing dishes. "You are a lost sinner, or you would n't call the prayer meeting stupid."

Harry always ran away when Kezia talked religion, and now she fled to the orchard for refuge, and was there when the girls started. Ella looked so pretty in her gray dress and little black hat, that she decided to forgive her for preferring the prayer meeting to a moonlight concert under the apple trees.

The June twilight was full of sweet scents and sounds; but the vestry where the meeting was held had been closed for a week, and was full of bad air, while the kerosene lamps dispelled the fading rosy light of sunset.

The worshipers were scattered over the large room, only half filling it; and, as if the meeting



was a duty and not a pleasure, they spoke and prayed with long pauses between, which were most distressing. The spirit which should pervade a prayer meeting was not there; but the Christians in Oakland had become so used to their lifeless worship, that they had almost forgotten what a soul stirring meeting was like.

Ella sat through it all, her brown eyes wandering round the room with a look of surprise and wonder in them; but when the meeting was over she made no comment. The ladies looked curiously at the stranger, and Bertha introduced one or two, but no one shook hands. Kezia exchanged a little gossip with her old friends, and then the three started for home.

They found Harry in the sitting-room reading on their return.

"Don't you wish you had stayed at home, Cousin Ella," said she, "instead of poking off to that stupid prayer meeting?"

Ella sat down in the rocking-chair without taking off either hat or jacket.

"Do you have a meeting like that every week?" she asked.

"Why, yes," replied Bertha; "of course we do. Why do you ask?"



"Don't you have any other?"

"No, indeed," said Bertha in surprise.

"I should think one prayer meeting a week was enough!" exclaimed Harry.

"But don't you have a young people's meeting of any kind?" queried Ella.

"There are only a few young Christians here," said Bertha, a little shadow resting on her face. She had joined the church when her mother died, but she felt sometimes as though she stood alone.

"Did n't you enjoy the meeting?" asked Kezia. "I thought there was a good many out. Did you notice Mis' Jones had on her black-and-white sateen, Berthy? She is a-leaving off her mourning and will soon be on the look-out for another husband."

"I wish," said Ella, slowly pulling off her gloves, "that I could take you to one of our Endeavor meetings."

"Endeavor meetings!" echoed Bertha.

"Yes," replied Ella. "I think you would feel that you had almost reached heaven."

"What kind of a thing is an Endeavor meeting?" asked Harry.

"Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor,



I mean. Have n't you heard of them?" asked Ella, as though she thought a great deal had been left out of her cousin's life.

"I have read about them," said Bertha. "They must be nice."

"You don't know how much good the societies have done," said Ella, "and what a help they are to young Christians. Every one says that our Endeavor meeting is the most interesting one of the week. I wish you could have one here."

No one made any answer as Ella paused, and the click of Kezia's knitting-needles was the only sound which broke the stillness. She had never heard of a Christian Endeavor Society, but left it for the girls to ask the questions.

Harry regarded her cousin with big, round eyes. She had a dread of being spoken to on religious subjects, and wondered if, when they were alone, Ella would talk to her as Kezia did, and tell her that she ought to be converted and join the church.

Bertha regarded her cousin wistfully, but shook her head, as she said, breaking the little pause:—

"It would be impossible, for there are no young Christians here."



“An Endeavor Society is just what you want to make young Christians,” Ella replied. “We did not know that so many of the young people in our church were interested until we formed an Endeavor Society.”

“What is it, anyway?” asked Harry bluntly.

“I ’ll show you;” and, without stopping to take off either hat or jacket, Ella ran upstairs, and returned with the card and little book which had attracted Bertha’s attention Monday afternoon.

Spreading them out on the table, the three girls bent over them, while Ella eagerly explained, and Kezia clicked her needles as she looked over the top of her glasses at the group.

“If you will only organize one I am sure it will be a success,” Ella declared.

But Bertha only shook her head.

“You don’t know anything about the people here, Ella,” said she. “You could not get them to carry on anything of the kind.”

“There is nothing like trying,” said Ella as she gathered up her things. “I believe I shall try, and if I fail — why, there will be no harm done.”



## CHAPTER IV.

## ELLA'S ENDEAVOR.

"MY dear young lady," said the Rev. Mr. Smith, "I think you are mistaken. The young people here have no interest in religious matters. I have labored among them for years, but have met with no success, and am almost entirely discouraged."

"It must be discouraging," said Ella sympathetically, "if you have no young people to help you in your work."

"There is nothing bad about them," the minister continued. "I would not have you think that there is, Miss Preston. It is only that they are cold and indifferent to religious matters. I feel that my labors among them are all in vain."

"Don't you think," asked Ella gently, "that you would find an Endeavor Society a help?"

The minister shook his head decidedly, as he replied:—



"There are no young people here to carry on an Endeavor Society, Miss Preston. I know of no one who would join if we organized one."

"Why, Joe and Harry would, I know," said Ella promptly. "There are two, anyway."

Mr. Smith simply stared in astonishment at this bold statement, and Bertha, sitting by the window, looked over to her cousin in surprise, for she thought Joe and Harry were the last ones to depend upon in this new work.

Neither had the minister any faith in the twins, for he had often seen them laughing and playing at the Sunday evening meetings when he, their pastor, was speaking; but he refrained, out of regard to their sister, from expressing his opinion.

"It is very kind of you to take an interest in us, Miss Preston," said he, "but I am afraid your plan will be utterly impossible as we are situated. We were very glad to see you at our meeting, and hope you and your aunt will both be able to attend while you remain with us."

The Rev. Mr. Smith had taken great pains to call on the ladies at the Whites', and Ella had done as she declared she should do on the first opportunity, — urged the pastor to organize a



Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. But Mr. Smith did not favor the plan. He had labored so long among the young people with no visible success, that he had not faith as a grain of mustard seed; and, moreover, had become so used to the old ways that he was very loth to undertake anything new.

Ella stood by the window watching the clerical gentleman go down the lane.

"It was very unwise in you, Ella," said her aunt reprovingly, "to introduce such personal subjects when a strange gentleman was calling. Why do you care whether there is a society of Christian Endeavor here or not?"

"It will help them so much, auntie," said Ella, turning from the window, "and do them so much good. I want them to have one because I know how much good it will do."

"It is kind of you, Ella," said Bertha, "but I am afraid it will not do as much good as you think. Mr. Smith tried to have a young people's prayer meeting here once, but it was a failure."

"What made it fail?" asked Ella.

"Oh, the boys and girls would laugh and play, and I 'm afraid they made fun of poor Mr. Smith.



There was no one to take part. It was awful! If you have any mercy on us, Ella, don't start anything of the kind again. I know Christian Endeavor Societies are nice where you live, for you have lots of young Christians, and people are wide-awake and earnest, but it is different here."

"You are a regular doubting Thomas, Bertha," said Ella. "I wonder how I am going to convert and convince you."

"You can't do it," laughed Bertha.

"Wait and see," Ella declared. "I have a new plan, and since you threw cold water on all my old suggestions, I will ship you off and try some one else."

That night Ella again asked permission to go after the cows, and at five o'clock started for the pasture with Harry and Joe; but neither the girl nor boy suspected that their cousin had a special reason for wanting to help drive home the cows.

As they followed the familiar lane to the pasture bars, she questioned Harry about her school-mates, writing down the names which she mentioned in a little gilt-edged notebook.

"What in the world do you want of the girls' names?" asked Harry, her curiosity roused at last.



"Perhaps you will know some day," said Ella gayly as she closed the book.

"It will be something nice, anyway," Harry declared, for her faith in Ella was unlimited.

"Why don't you ask for the names of some of my friends?" asked Joe. "I could tell you of some fellows worth three of those girls."

"I 'll leave them until later," replied Ella. "I 'll catch the girls; then I won't have any trouble about getting the boys."

The next morning ushered in ironing day, and, as it promised to be hot, Kezia was anxious to get to work early. So she had breakfast betimes, and left Bertha to wait on the boarders, who, she declared with a sniff,

"Would n't be down in any kind of season."

Bertha was out in the garden cutting asparagus for dinner, while Kezia, in the kitchen, was vigorously pounding down on the ironing board, when Ella suddenly appeared in the door.

Kezia did not welcome her very graciously, for she did not like to have people in pale pink morning-dresses, trimmed with lace, watch her while at work. Besides, she had just begun on a ruffled skirt of that young lady's, which put her a little



out of temper. She did not think it necessary for people to trim their clothes and make them so hard to iron.

Nothing daunted, however, Ella went round to the woodbine-draped window, opposite the ironing table, and sat down.

"Kezia," said she, looking into that lady's sharp and wrinkled visage, "I have got a great favor to ask of you."

"I don't know what you can want of me," said Kezia, holding her flatiron against her cheek to test its heat.

"I want a tea party," said Ella slowly. "Can I have one?"

"What on earth have you come to me for?" asked Kezia tartly. "I ain't mistress in this house, nor never expect to be. What's more, I don't mean to try for the position, either."

"Oh, I know that," said Ella, with a gleam of fun in her eyes, for she had heard from Joe of Miss Wilder's views concerning widowers. "I went to Bertha about the tea party, and she said she was willing if you were."

"If you and Bertha want a tea party I ain't got nothing to say," said Kezia, pulling the skirt round spitefully, for the ruffles bothered her.



"It is not Bertha's party, but mine," said Ella, "and I shall want you to help me."

"I suppose I can get up a supper good enough for town folks," said Kezia, as though she doubted her ability to suit city people.

"I shall want some cream biscuits no larger than that," and Ella held up her thumb and finger formed in a small circle.

"My land!" cried Kezia. "How many do you expect 'em to eat?"

"Half a dozen apiece," replied Ella promptly. "Then I want the ham cut thin as shavings, one of your famous creamcakes, and tarts, and I want the table set under the apple trees."

"Out-doors!" exclaimed Kezia, with suspended flatiron.

"Yes; don't you think it will be lovely to have the table out in the orchard?"

"Whoever heard of such a notion?" said Kezia. "I thought the dining room was made to eat in."

"So it is," replied Ella; "but it will be nice to have this supper out in the orchard."

"Every one to their taste," said Kezia; "I never did enjoy eating out-doors, nor see why folks



thought such a sight of picnics, and sitting down among spiders and ants."

"I think the girls will enjoy it," said Ella, "and if you are willing I will invite them for Saturday."

"Land sakes! it ain't for me to say whether you 'll have 'em or not. I 'll make the things for yer, if that is what yer driving at."

Kezia had got the ruffled skirt done up, and could now afford to be gracious.

"Oh, thank you ever so much!" said Ella, jumping up. "I am sure you will enjoy it, and like my plan of eating supper out-of-doors."

Not even Bertha herself knew what Ella's plans were, though she had her suspicions as she saw the little pile of dainty invitation cards which Harry was to deliver to her friends; but she kept them to herself, and assisted Ella all she could in her preparations for the eventful Saturday afternoon and evening.

"You don't know how utterly thoughtless those girls are, Ella," she could not help saying at length. "I don't want to discourage you, but I am afraid you are planning something which you will not be able to carry through."



"Now, doubting Thomas, you just keep still and watch!" said Ella merrily, shaking her head at her cousin. "I believe you people down here don't know anything about girls, and your young folks have never had their just dues."

Bertha meekly obeyed this command, and kept her doubts to herself as she helped get ready for the tea party. Every one was interested in it, even Miss Moore, though she told her niece that she did not approve of it. Kezia cooked all the dainties Ella asked for, and Bertha took down her mother's old-fashioned china, whose quaint decorations her cousin admired so much, and Harry picked flowers and made bouquets for the table.

Only Joe stood one side, pretending to feel great scorn toward the affair, and privately informed Harry that she would get into a scrape if she did n't look out.

The girls all came promptly at four, the hour given on the invitation cards, dressed in their prettiest light summer dresses, all eager to make the acquaintance of Harry's pretty young lady cousin. There were seven of them, all classmates and intimate friends.

As Ella watched them she thought to herself,



“What a power they will be if I can only enlist them for Christ!”

They were pretty girls, not beauties any of them; but seventeen and eighteen is an age always attractive if it has health to make it so, and these girls were all fresh and happy, and formed a pretty picture as they gathered round Ella.

There were girls with blue eyes and girls with black; girls with yellow hair and girls with brown; there were noisy girls and quiet girls; laughing girls and sober girls; and as Ella watched them she decided that the Rev. Mr. Smith was very much mistaken in regard to his young people.

Nan Winters was Harry's particular chum. She was not pretty, but her gray eyes had a merry twinkle in them, and her teeth were white and even. Ella liked her quick, decided way of speaking, and rightly guessed that if she could enlist her, the others would soon follow.

They had some pleasant games of croquet (lawn tennis had not found its way to that country village), and when they were tired they went into the parlor, where Ella taught them how to make crambo verses, while Bertha and Kezia set the table out in the orchard.



Of course the girls enjoyed the supper; and as their peals of laughter reached the dining room where the rest of the family were, Kezia thought that dining out-of-doors was not such a bad notion after all. Ella had tried to coax Joe to join them, but the boy was too bashful to go out among so many girls, so he ate in the dining room, and wished he had the courage to go out and share the fun in the orchard.

After supper Ella entertained them for a while with her banjo; but, though Bertha never knew how she managed it, it was soon laid aside, and Ella was talking Christian Endeavor to the girls, who were gathered round her listening eagerly. They would listen to anything that she told them, Bertha thought, but what would be the result when she proposed organizing one?

Ella asked the question in the most natural way possible. A little pause followed her proposal, and then Nan Winters said frankly:—

“We are none of us Christians, Miss Preston.”

“But is that any reason why you should not have an Endeavor Society?” asked Ella. “You all intend to be Christians some time, don’t you?”



"I suppose so; when we are old enough," said Nan with a little laugh.

"I know girls younger than you who are active members," said Ella earnestly. "O girls, I wish you would promise to begin now, and not put it off any longer!"

"I won't be a Christian while Mr. Smith is here," declared Harry. "It would disappoint him so! He told me there was no hope for me, I acted so."

"Me too," chimed in Nan. "We are past all hope, you see, Miss Preston."

"No one is past hope," said she gently. "Would n't you like to have an Endeavor Society here, girls?"

"I 'd like it well enough," said Nan; "but I don't want to join."

"We would go to the meetings," said Emma Baker, a girl who always did just what her friends told her. "I like to go to prayer meetings when they are good."

"I think it would be nice," said Lucy Nash timidly.

Lucy was the daughter of a very strong-minded woman, who, though a very zealous Christian, was



a somewhat narrow one. She was bringing her daughter up not to love the pomps and vanities; so, though she was seventeen, poor Lucy's dresses barely reached the tops of her boots; her hair was cut short like a boy's, and her coarse, thick shoes were several sizes larger than her feet.

"Now, girls," said Ella earnestly, "promise me one thing, if a society is organized, that you will all join either as active or associate members."

"Associate members don't have to be Christians, do they?" asked Nan.

"They don't have to be," replied Ella, "but they promise to think about it."

"I 'll promise to think about it, Miss Preston," said Nan soberly.

"We 'll all join as associate members," said Emma, "and go to the meetings."

"I 'll become an active member if my mother is willing," said Lucy quietly.

"There!" exclaimed Ella to Bertha, "we have one active member already; is n't that encouraging?"

"How are you going to organize?" asked Harry.



"Why, just as you organize any society," replied Ella. "Whom would you like to have for your president?"

"Why, you, of course," they all promptly replied.

"No," said she, shaking her head. "I shall only stay through the summer. You want some one who will be here all the time."

"There is n't any one, Ella," laughed Harry. "You will have to be president if you want an Endeavor Society."

"Why can't you be president?" asked Nan, turning to Bertha.

"I could n't take such a responsibility," she replied; "besides, Ella has promised not to put any of her plan on me."

"Is n't there some young man who would take it?" asked Ella.

"There are no young men, Ella," laughed Harry, "and the boys are good for nothing."

Ella looked discouraged for the first time. It was worse than she had thought it could be. But Nan made a proposal which gave her a ray of hope.



"There is J. Murry," said she; "we forgot him, girls."

"Who is J. Murry?" asked Ella.

"He is our school-teacher," replied Harry. "You must see him, for he is a sight worth looking at."

"Is he a young man and a Christian?" asked Ella eagerly.

"He is a young man," replied Harry, "with a mustache that he was two years raising."

"Do you think he would be president?"

"He would if you asked him," said Harry frankly, "for he would n't dare say no."

"He would make the same prayer that he does every morning in school," said Nan, "and read the Nineteenth Psalm."

"Fan Brown said that she was going to tear the Psalms out of J. Murry's Bible, and see if he would n't read somewhere else," said Emma Baker.

"He would repeat the Nineteenth from memory if she did," laughed Harry.

These speeches would have shocked Mr. Smith; but Ella was used to girls, and was not shocked a bit. She changed the subject, however; and



though she said no more about the Christian Endeavor Society, she felt that her effort had not been in vain as she bade the girls good night, and sent them home full of raptures over the good time they had had.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE PRESIDENT.

IT had rained for two days, and all the lovely blossoms of the apple trees had been swept off and lay decaying on the ground. Bertha stood by the window in Ella's room searching the sky in vain for some signs that it was clearing off, while her cousin made her toilet for the afternoon.

"When shall we make a raid on J. Murry?" the latter asked presently.

Bertha turned round with a little start of surprise.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Just what I say," replied Ella; "we must go to that gentleman and convince him that it is his duty to become president of our Endeavor Society. He will have honor thrust upon him for once."

"I was in hopes you had given up that idea,"



said Bertha, subsiding into the rocking-chair with a sigh.

"If you knew me as well as some people do," said Ella gravely, "you would know that I never give up anything until I am obliged to."

"You might as well give this up first as last," replied Bertha, "for you will be obliged to sooner or later."

"I don't see it in that light at all, my dear Job's comforter," said Ella cheerfully. "I feel wonderfully encouraged. We are sure of three active members, — you and I and that little Nash girl, besides our president. Now, is n't that a good beginning?"

"Are you sure of your president?" asked Bertha with a doubting smile.

"The girls said J. Murry would n't dare to refuse me."

"How are you going to ask him?"

"I will attack him with all my persuasive powers," declared Ella. "Do you think he will be able to resist them?"

"But how will you be able to make the attack?" asked Bertha. "You don't know him."

"You must introduce me."



"Don't count on me," laughed Bertha. "I have but little acquaintance with the man, and hardly ever see him."

"Then I'll get Harry to introduce me," Ella declared.

"How will you manage it?" Bertha persisted. "He never comes here."

"Then I will go to him," Ella calmly replied. "I'll visit his school."

"Why, Ella Preston!" exclaimed Bertha.

"Why should n't I visit his school?" demanded the young lady. "Does n't he allow visitors?"

"Of course," replied Bertha; "but what will people say to your visiting the school on purpose to get acquainted with the teacher?"

"I don't see as it is any one's business," said Ella, shrugging her shoulders.

"Our affairs are every one's business here," replied Bertha. "If you should do that they would talk and say all sorts of things."

"What would they say?" asked Ella.

"I should think you might guess," replied Bertha. "He is a young unmarried man."

"Would they think I wanted to marry him?" asked Ella, laughing. "Is every one like Kezia?"



Can't you speak to an unmarried man without being accused of having designs upon him? If that is the case, I don't know whom to pity most, the young ladies or Mr. Murry."

"It is different here from what it is in Boston," was all the apology Bertha could make.

"I should say it was!" Ella declared. "But because Mr. Murry is not blessed with a wife is no reason why he can't be president of the Christian Endeavor Society. But let us go downstairs; auntie will be lonesome there alone."

Miss Moore had complained bitterly of the weather for the last two days, declaring that she had never experienced such cold weather in June in all her life.

Kezia took these remarks as a personal insult; and though she had not been able to get her clothes dry for the week, she declared that she enjoyed the rain.

This afternoon Miss Moore had requested a fire in the sitting-room, and now sat beside it writing, while Kezia, who had drawn as far away from it as she could, sat clicking her knitting needles by the front window.

"How nice and cheery this is!" said Ella, drawing a rocking-chair up to the open fire.



"One would mildew in this weather if it were not for the fires," replied her aunt. "Have you any message to send in my letter? I have just told them that had the doctor known how much dampness they have down here he would never have advised you to come."

"That will be message enough without my adding anything," said Ella, opening her book.

"I hope this rain will fill up the cistern," remarked Kezia, gazing out of the windows, "for it is most empty."

"We don't want too much of a good thing," laughed Bertha. "Why do you sit in that straight-backed chair, Kezia? Take the rocker."

"I ain't a salamander," retorted Miss Wilder, with a glance at her enemy's aristocratic back, "and can't roast over a fire in June."

Bertha smiled, but said no more, thinking the subject not a judicious one to pursue. The quartet pursued their different occupations uninterrupted, until a couple of umbrellas came up the lane, and Joe and Harry came in from school.

"My letter! oh, my letter!" cried Ella, holding out her hand as the twins entered the room.



"How do you know you 've got a letter?" demanded Joe.

"How do I know that it rains out-of-doors, and that you went round by the post office for me?" she replied, still holding out her hand. "Give it to me, that 's a good boy."

"He did n't write this week," said Joe solemnly. "Too bad! but he forgot all about it. Youth is fickle, and not to be trusted."

"Oh, you bad boy!" said Ella, frowning. "Give me my letter, and stop your nonsense."

"I tried to break it to her gently, but she wouldn't let me," sighed Joe. "It may have been delayed in the mail, and may come to-morrow. Hello! What is this?" and he pulled something out of his pocket.

"You are the worst boy!" exclaimed Ella. "I am not going to tease you for my property: keep it if you want to."

"It must be for Miss Moore," said Joe, turning it over and over. "She expected nothing, therefore she shall not be disappointed," and he dropped the thick epistle into that lady's lap.

"It is not for me," said Miss Moore, picking up her eyeglasses to examine it. "It is yours of course, Ella."



The young lady received her letter with a reproachful glance at Joe, and, opening it, fell to reading its contents.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Harry, lying down on the sofa, "if it does n't clear off soon I shall mildew. I 'm not going to tramp through this mud any longer, for J. Murry or any other man."

"You 're not sweet enough to melt," remarked Joe, "so you need n't worry."

"The weather is very depressing," said Miss Moore, wiping her pen. "I never experienced such a deplorable state of dampness."

"Your pa is glad enough to see the rain," said Kezia to Harry, "for the grass was all drying up."

"Let it dry, who cares?" replied Joe. "Won't have to cut it if it does. I won't be able to hay, anyway, for I 'm worn to a shadow now studying for examination."

"I guess it won't kill you," remarked Bertha unfeelingly.

"You 'll think of that speech when you follow me to an early grave," sighed Joe. "There 's only one thing that 'll carry me through, and that 's some of your popovers, Kezia."



"You need n't try to get round me," replied Kezia; "I 'll risk your dying yet awhile."

"Is it examination week?" asked Ella, looking up from her letter. "When does your school close?"

"Next Friday; thanks be to goodness!" said Harry fervently.

"Are the examinations public?" asked Ella.

"They pretend to be," replied Harry; "but no one ever comes in to hear them."

"Would it shock society if we went next Friday, Bertha?" laughed Ella.

"I don't know," said she slowly. "I think you had much better give it all up."

"I shall not give it up without trying," declared Ella. "We 'll visit the school next Friday, anyway."

"You had better not," spoke up Harry, "for we don't want you."

"You might take pity on a fellow," added Joe. "Your presence will be too much for me in my feeble state, and I shall flunk on the spot."

"We are not going to see you, Joe," said Ella sweetly; "our object is to make Mr. Murry's acquaintance."



"Here 's a lark!" cried Joe. "Won't I enjoy telling him!"

"Don't you say one word to him," commanded Bertha. "If you do I will never forgive you."

"Won't I though," declared Joe, winking at Ella. "He 'll thank me for a timely warning, so that he can put on his necktie with the blue spots in it."

"Joe, if you say anything to him, I won't make another tart for you as long as I live," said Bertha solemnly. "That is just as true as I sit here."

"I won't tell on you, Bird," said the youngster, alarmed at this dreadful threat; "but I 'll just mention Ella's intentions."

"I am perfectly willing," said that young lady, calmly going on with her letter. "I have not the least objection."

"She takes it calmly," remarked Joe. "J. Murry will be awfully flattered, and think he 's made a mash on the young lady from Boston."

"Stop your nonsense, Joe!" ordered Bertha, "and go after the cows."

After trying in vain to tease his cousin, Joe obeyed, reminding Kezia of the popovers as he left the room.



Harry still lay on the sofa, and, contrary to custom, took no part in the conversation. Ella had set all the girls thinking, and they had had some serious talks among themselves since her tea party.

Nan was very earnest and thoughtful, which troubled Harry, who felt that her friend was drifting away from her. Now, as she listened to the conversation, she could not help hoping that John Murry would refuse to be president, and that Ella would have to give up her idea of starting a Christian Endeavor Society. But there was no hope of her doing so until every means in her power had failed.

It cleared off at last, and Friday morning Ella announced her intention of visiting the school, and declared that Bertha must go with her.

"There is not the ghost of a reason why you should not," said she, "for your own brother and sister are there, and you ought to have interest enough in them to go and see what progress they have made during the term. The greatest busybody in town can find no fault with you for that."

"I don't care for the busybodies," said Bertha



slowly; "but I wonder what John Murry will think."

"He 'll think we want a Christian Endeavor Society," said Ella promptly. "I had just as lief he knew what I came for as not."

"The girls act so silly about him," Bertha objected. "You don't know what idiots some of them are."

"I know girls are silly sometimes," Ella replied, "and it is not to be wondered at when they know only one young man; but we are not silly girls in our teens, Bertha, but sensible young ladies, and there is no reason in the world why we should not go to the schoolhouse to see Mr. Murry on business."

Bertha consented with a sigh, on finding all her objections overruled, and went to her room, after dinner, to get ready for the occasion. Since she had made up her mind to it, she thought she might as well dress up; so she put on her black cashmere, took her best hat out of its bandbox, and indulged in the luxury of her one pair of kid gloves. She looked as quiet as a little nun beside Ella, who stood in the door waiting for her, in a suit of the faintest tint of green, with a dainty, stylish hat resting on her wavy hair.



Bertha's misgivings returned in full force as they neared the schoolhouse, and she wondered what people would say if they knew for what object they were bound. When they reached the playground which surrounded the large white building, she would have been glad of an excuse to back out; but it was too late. Ella walked up to the door, then paused for Bertha to do the business.

It was a very timid little knock that Bertha gave; but the master heard it, and opened the door with a book in his hand. Even Ella could see that he was surprised, and as for Bertha, she did not know what to do, and an awkward pause followed the first greetings.

Mr. Murry soon recovered himself, however, and asking his visitors in, gave them seats on the platform.

Bertha felt the color creep into her cheeks as she glanced round the schoolroom and saw the laughing glances exchanged among the girls, and Ella found it hard work to keep sober as Joe laid his hand on his heart and heaved a profound sigh.

If the master felt any embarrassment at the presence of his young lady guests he did not show



it, but went on with his recitations as usual; and as Ella watched him she decided that, as far as she could judge from outward appearance, he would do very well for the position she wanted him to fill.

He was a young, slight-looking fellow, quick and active in his movements, and, though boyish in appearance, kept perfect order in his school, and, as Ella rightly surmised, the scholars obeyed from respect rather than fear.

The session was half done when they came in, but Bertha dreaded the time for it to close, for then she must present her cousin, and make known her errand.

The bell rang at last, and the scholars filed out. As the last one left the schoolroom the master turned to his guests. Introducing her cousin, Bertha plunged into her business at once, in order to have it over with as soon as possible, so that Ella could do the talking and make her own proposals.

Mr. Murry's face lighted up at the mention of a Christian Endeavor Society, and he said eagerly, "I have thought of it often, and wished we might have one. I think it would do a great deal of good."



"That is what my cousin thinks," said Bertha, turning to Ella. "She wished to speak to you about it."

"Have you ever tried to start one, Mr. Murry?" asked Ella, coming forward.

"I went so far as to speak to Mr. Smith about it," he replied with a little smile.

"I have spoken to Mr. Smith also," said Ella. Then they both laughed outright. "He is not in favor of it," Ella continued; "but I think he will be when he finds it is a success. Don't you think it would be well to start one, Mr. Murry?"

The young man looked doubtful as he leaned against the desk, fingering his watch chain.

"One or two can not carry it on alone," said he. "It requires a band of workers."

"O Mr. Murry! please don't discourage me," pleaded Ella. "Every one I have mentioned it to has thrown cold water on it, but I depended on you."

Mr. Murry was won by the earnest voice and pleading brown eyes, just as Bertha felt that he would be, and replied heartily:—

"I will do all I can to help you, Miss Preston."

Ella was delighted, and thanked the young man



as warmly as though he had promised to become president at once.

Mr. Murry left the schoolroom with them, talking earnestly about the work with Ella, while Bertha listened, thinking how easily her cousin had won the young man to consent to her plan.

"It 's all owing to a pretty face and manner," mused the young lady. "If John Murry was a woman he would think twice before pledging himself to such an undertaking; but being a young man he can't refuse, and she knows it."

When they parted Ella said with a frankness which astonished Bertha, —

"If you will come up some evening, Mr. Murry, we can talk it over, and make our plans."

"Thank you; I will," he replied; and, touching his hat, bade the two young ladies good-by.

As for Bertha, her breath was fairly taken away to hear her cousin invite a young man to whom she had just been introduced to spend the evening with her. What would John Murry think? He had never been asked to spend an evening at the Whites' before in his life.

"Is n't it nice?" said Ella as they walked on alone. "I was afraid that he would n't consent



at first. I suppose I ought to have waited for you to ask him to come and see us, but I did n't dare to, you are so 'set' against such things, as Kezia says."

"It 's well you did n't wait for me," laughed Bertha, "for I never asked a young man to come and see me in my life."

"Then I suppose I shocked you!"

"Oh, no," replied Bertha gayly. "I suppose it is all right in Boston."

"I wanted to talk it over with him," said Ella, "and ask him to be president, and what other chance would I have to do so?"

"It 's all right," said Bertha. "I suppose between you, you will get one started."

"I hope so," said Ella earnestly. "But I just happen to think — does Mr. Murry live here?"

"Why, yes," replied Bertha. "Why do you ask?"

"I was afraid that he was n't a native, and now that his school was done he would be going home on a vacation. In that case he would n't do us any good."

"He lives here with his mother, who is a widow," replied Bertha. "When he got through



college he took this school, so that he could be with her. He has always been a good boy to his mother."

"Then you must know him well," said Ella. "I did n't know you were old friends."

"We are not," Bertha replied. "He has been away a great deal, and I have seen very little of him."

"You will get acquainted now," said Ella, as they entered the hall, "for there is nothing like an Endeavor Society for making friends."

"Oh, dear! I dread it," sighed Bertha. "You don't know what you are planning."

"Don't I?" laughed Ella. "You just wait and see. If I am not mistaken you will be very much surprised, my doubting Thomas." With a gay nod Ella ran upstairs, leaving Bertha in the hall below.



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE FIRST MEETING.

MR. JOHN MURRY accepted Ella's invitation, and presented himself at the Whites' the next Saturday evening. Bertha, who was not surprised to see him, had the parlor lit in his honor, and ushered him in.

Ella was full of plans, and came in with her hands full of leaflets, newspaper cuttings, and slips relating to the business in hand, — that of organizing a local society of Christian Endeavor, — which she laid before their guest; and soon the two were talking like old friends, while Bertha sat by listening, busy with some crochet thread-work.

Of course Mr. Murry agreed to everything Ella proposed, and consented at once to being president, thus causing Bertha to smile wisely to herself, as she thought of the power a pair of



brown eyes possessed, set under a white forehead, crowned with wavy, shining hair.

"How many active members are you sure of?" Mr. Murry asked.

"I 'm only sure of one," laughed Ella. "The little Nash girl promised to become one."

"There is Bertha," said Mr. Murry, glancing at the young lady with the crochet work.

"I don't count on her at all," said Ella, shaking her head, "for she has discouraged me right straight along, and I have promised not to call on her for anything."

"I shall join as an active member," said Bertha quietly, "if you succeed in organizing a society."

"If we succeed!" laughed Ella. "Just hear her!"

"I think we shall succeed," said Mr. Murry decidedly, "even if we do begin with only four active members."

As a result of Mr. Murry's evening call at the Whites' a notice was read from the pulpit the next day, inviting all those interested in organizing a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor to meet in the vestry the following evening.



Before he went home Saturday evening Mr. Murry had called on his pastor. Mr. Smith still had no faith in the Endeavor movement doing any good in his church, but he was glad to have the young people take hold and try to help him in his work, and promised Mr. Murry to go to the vestry Monday evening, and help them all he could.

“Organizing an Endeavor Society will not make Christians,” said he, thinking he ought to warn the young man not to be too hopeful. “We need live Christians to enter into it in order to make it a success.”

“God’s Spirit does not depend upon numbers,” said Mr. Murry.

“That is so,” replied the minister; “and we must pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our meetings.”

Monday evening the three girls from the Whites’ started early; but the girls who had been at Ella’s tea party were at the vestry before them. The room was as uninviting as it had been the first evening Ella had entered it, and she could not help feeling a little discouraged as she thought of the handsome, well-lighted vestry-room where the



earnest, wide-awake young people of her own Endeavor Society gathered in such large numbers every week.

Mr. Smith came forward with a smile to greet her.

"I am afraid there are not enough here to organize," said he, shaking hands. "Still, there are as many as I expected. I hope you are not disappointed, Miss Preston?"

"We are early," said Ella, determined not to show her discouragement. "I think more are coming."

Mr. Smith shook his head doubtfully.

"It is half-past seven," said he, drawing out his watch. "I am afraid we will not be able to do anything this evening."

"Mr. Murry is coming," declared Ella, "and we can sing, anyway. Would n't you like to try some of these hymns while we are waiting, girls?"

She broke away from Mr. Smith, and went to the little group gathered in the corner. Of course they would agree to anything Ella proposed, and followed her to the organ. It was old and out of tune, but Ella could make any instrument do its best; and opening the copy of Gospel Hymns



which she had brought, she played one of the most familiar tunes, while the girls sang with a spirit which cheered John Murry's heart as he opened the door and was greeted by the strains of "To The Work," as he had never heard it sung in that vestry before.

Mr. Smith met him with the same greeting he had given Ella.

"I 'm afraid our undertaking is a failure," said he, shaking hands, "and we will not be able to organize to-night."

"I don't see why not," said the young man, glancing at the group round the organ. "There seems to be a goodly company here."

"Only a few girls," replied the minister, "and it is after half-past seven."

"How many does it require to organize a Christian Endeavor Society?" asked the young man.

"Why, a dozen at least, to make it a success," the minister declared. "Don't you think so?"

"Why, no," said Mr. Murry. "I think two could do it, and we have two, four, six, eight, besides ourselves. I think there is no doubt about our being able to organize; do you, Miss Preston?"



Ella had left the organ and joined them.

"Are there as many as you expected, Mr. Murry?" she asked.

"More, if anything," he replied promptly. "If all those girls join we shall have a good society. We can sing at any rate, and have praise meetings, if nothing more."

"Then let us go to work at once," said Ella eagerly, encouraged by John's hopeful words and manner.

Mr. Smith took the chair, and called the meeting to order, and the girls slipped into a seat, rather inclined to laugh at the smallness of the number. Ella felt discouraged for their sakes rather than her own; for she knew it would require a great deal of courage for them to join the society, and pledge themselves to carry on a meeting once a week with no more to help and support them.

There were five besides the girls from the Whites', — Nan Winters, Emma Baker, Lucy Nash, and another of their schoolmates, Belle Ellis by name, who had come in out of curiosity to see what a Christian Endeavor Society was like. The fifth member of the group was too old to be



called a girl. Etta Stewart was thirty, but she had always gone with girls much younger than herself, so they always counted her in as one of them. She had been a member of the church for years, but her voice was never heard in the prayer meetings; and so, though Ella greeted her warmly when they were introduced, Bertha felt that she could not be counted on for much help in their new work.

Mr. Smith opened the meeting, and explained the method of carrying on a Christian Endeavor Society; read the pledge, and some extracts from the model constitution, winding up his speech by saying that though some thought it was best to organize that night, he would like to hear an expression of the meeting on the question.

A little pause followed, and then John Murry got onto his feet, and expressed his views in a way that caused Ella to rejoice that she had enlisted this young man as a co-laborer.

He and Ella carried the day, and they decided to organize. Mr. Smith acted as chairman, and Etta Stewart, being one of those convenient young ladies who carry lead pencils in their pockets, produced one, and he proceeded to take down the



names of those who would join as active or associate members. John, Ella, and Bertha promptly gave theirs as active members. Etta reluctantly put hers down with theirs, and then Mr. Smith advanced, pencil in hand, to where the girls sat.

"I suppose you young ladies will join as associate members," said he. "Shall I put you down as one, Miss Winters?"

"I will join as active, if you please," said Nan in a low tone, flushing painfully at the glances of astonishment which were cast in her direction.

"Active member! did you say, Miss Winters?" asked Mr. Smith, pausing, pencil in hand, in great surprise.

"Yes, if you please," repeated Nan in a pleading tone, as though asking for a great favor.

"There is another who will join as an active member," said Ella, turning toward the girls with a radiant face. "Miss Nash will hand in her name too."

"No," said Lucy quietly; "I have changed my mind. My mother is not willing for me to join as an active member."

Ella's face fell, but she turned to Emma, and asked her in a low tone if she had decided how



she would join. Emma had not thought of becoming an active member when she entered the vestry; but since Nan had, and Ella wanted her to, she gave her name to Mr. Smith, who wrote it under the others in a bewildered manner.

Harry and Belle handed theirs in as associate members, the latter not because she wanted to join, but because she did not know how to refuse; and they proceeded to organize.

John was elected president, and Bertha, much against her will, was chosen vice president. Etta Stewart, being a very methodical person, as was proved by the pencil, was made secretary and treasurer. Ella refused to take an office herself, because she would only be with them for the summer, but consented to be chairman of the Prayer Meeting Committee; and they were all put on the Lookout Committee.

"And now," said Mr. Smith, "if there is no other business to come before the meeting, a motion to adjourn will be in order."

"Don't you think," asked Ella timidly, "that it would be well to have a prayer and hymn before we close?"

Mr. Smith agreed; and as they bowed their



heads while he asked a blessing on the society they had just formed, nearly all consecrated themselves to the new work which they had entered upon.

"Are you satisfied?" asked Bertha of her cousin. "You have got a Christian Endeavor Society at last."

Ella turned from Nan, with whom she had been exchanging a few whispered words, with a bright face.

"I am not satisfied," she replied, "but I do feel hopeful, don't you?"

"I don't know," said Bertha doubtfully. "It still seems like a great undertaking to me."

"Poor Bertha!" laughed Ella. "I believe you will never forgive me for drawing you into the society against your will."

"Yes, she will," said John, joining them; "for this is going to succeed now that we have had the faith to start."

"All we need is faith," said Ella. "I own that I was discouraged when we came in to-night, but Nan has given me fresh hope."

"Lucy Nash surprised me more than Nan did," said John; "but I think her mother is to blame.



If the girl had been let alone she would have joined as an active member."

"I can't imagine a mother opposing a daughter's joining a Christian Endeavor Society," said Ella. "Does n't she believe in religion?"

"On the contrary, she is very religious," replied John, "but she has very narrow views. She was my Sunday-school teacher once, and I 'm afraid we treated her with none too much respect, though I honestly believe we would have liked her better if she had only dressed like other ladies, and tried to make her personal appearance more attractive."

This speech surprised Bertha. She knew the lady in question well, but she did not suppose that John Murry knew anything about a lady's dress. It seemed that he did, however, and no doubt admired Ella's stylish costumes. Bertha heaved a little sigh as she watched her pretty cousin.

Harry and Nan went home together that night arm in arm, schoolgirl fashion, with their heads bent close together.

"How did you come to do it, Nan?" Harry was saying. "I did n't know you were thinking of such a thing."



"I have been thinking ever since that night at your house," Nan replied. "You know your cousin said if we were not for God we were against him. I could n't get those words out of my head."

"I know," replied Harry. "I have felt uncomfortable ever since that night."

"This is the only way, Harry," said Nan earnestly. "If we want to be saved we must ask Christ to be our Saviour."

"Only think what you have pledged yourself to do," said Harry. "You have got to take part in every meeting."

"I know," replied Nan; "but if I was n't pledged, I'm afraid I should never get the courage to speak at all. I hope I will not be ashamed to say I want to be a Christian."

As Nan said these words Harry respected her as she never had before, and wished that she too could break the fetters which bound her and take a decided stand for Christ; but, instead of saying so, she began to discourage the young Christian.

"You will have to lead when it is your turn," said she. "Imagine your leading a prayer meeting, Nan Winters!"

"Will I, really?" asked Nan in dismay.



"Of course you will," declared Harry. "Think of sitting up in the desk like Mr. Smith!"

"Oh, I won't do it!" cried Nan in alarm.

"I'll coax the Prayer Meeting Committee to let me off."

"You are pledged to do it when you are called upon," said Harry, who had made a study of the constitution.

Nan walked on for a few minutes with bent head, but at last she drew a long breath and said softly,—

"I can do it if Christ helps me, and of course he will."

This silenced Harry. It seemed as though her friend had gone way beyond her, when in reality she had only become as a little child, and begun to grow up in her Father's likeness.

The next afternoon Bertha appeared at her cousin's door with the announcement that she had a caller downstairs.

"It is Mrs. Nash," said she. "She inquired very particularly for you. Perhaps she has come to see about Lucy's joining the Endeavor Society."

"Oh, I hope so!" said Ella eagerly. "I'll go right down and see."



A tall, thin lady rose to greet her as she entered the room, and Ella's first thought was of what John Murry had said the night before about his old Sunday-school teacher. Nature had not lavished her charms upon Mrs. Nash, and she wore her clothes simply as a covering for her body, without regard to style or taste, so it was no wonder that her personal appearance had not prepossessed a class of boys in her favor.

"I have come to see you about that society just organized, Miss Preston," she began. "Lucy wished to join, but I thought it best to make some inquiries first."

Ella was all ready to answer inquiries, and launched at once into a description of the Christian Endeavor work.

"You can get a better idea of it from this little book," said she, handing her visitor the little gilt-edged copy she had brought downstairs with her. "It contains the constitution and a copy of the pledge which the members sign."

"I have read a good deal about the Christian Endeavor Society," said the lady, "but it seems to me that it is too liberal in its views."

"I have found it a great help to me," said Ella,



wondering if there was such a thing as naving too much charity.

"But there is danger of its causing young people to forget the importance of a creed," said Mrs. Nash, pulling at the loose fingers of her gloves. "I understand that the society embraces all denominations."

"That is the beauty of it," said Ella eagerly. "The difference in sect can not come into the Christian Endeavor Society."

"I think it very unwise to allow young people such liberty," said Mrs. Nash gravely, shaking her head, "for it may prove a great injury to them. This is an age of doubt and infidelity, Miss Preston, and we can not be too careful with those who are under our care."

"I think the rapid growth of the Christian Endeavor Society is a testimony of the good it is doing," said Ella decidedly. "Surely God has blessed it!"

"But embracing all doctrines can not be anything but hurtful," the lady declared. "I am a Baptist and can not unite with a people who do not believe in close communion and are so very lax about baptism."



"Communion and baptism are questions which do not come up in our Christian Endeavor Societies," replied Ella, amused in spite of herself. "Because your daughter is a Baptist is no reason why she can not join. I don't believe we would refuse to admit a Roman Catholic if one wished to join with us."

Mrs. Nash was horrified; and after such a dreadful statement all Ella's pleading that she would let her daughter join was vain. All she could accomplish was to coax her to take a copy of the constitution and look it over.

"Poor Lucy!" thought Ella, as she watched her visitor go down the lane. "How thankful I am that my lines have fallen among people with broader views!"



## CHAPTER VII.

*A BOY CHRISTIAN.*

THE next week public feeling underwent a change, and the Christian Endeavor Society became popular. Nan Winters joining as an active member created quite a sensation among her young friends, who watched her curiously, to see if becoming a Christian made any difference in her. Some of the older people shook their heads, and said they were afraid she did not know what she was doing, and Harry White would be joining as an active member next.

Ella carried the meeting on her heart all the week, and prayed earnestly that it might be a success, and accomplish a great deal of good.

Monday afternoon the Lookout Committee went down to the vestry, rearranged the seats, banished the large, old-fashioned desk, and placed a small stand covered with a gay red cloth, with



a couple of chairs on either side, in its place; and as a finishing touch Ella put a vase of flowers upon it, and another on the organ. When they had finished the room bore a changed aspect.

At five o'clock, as Harry sat in the hammock, waiting for Ella and Bertha to return, she saw a stranger coming up the lane. It was a young man, tall, straight, and slim, dressed in a suit of light summer clothes, carrying a gripsack in one hand, and some things strapped together in the other. Harry's first thought was that he was a peddler, — such gentlemen being not unusual at that time of year, — and leaving the hammock she approached the house. The gentleman had seen her, however, and, politely lifting his hat, accosted her before she reached the door.

Harry replied to his "good-afternoon" rather coolly. She snubbed all peddlers from principle; but this young gentleman was not to be snubbed.

"May I ask for a few minutes of your valuable time?" he said, setting his grip down on the step, and taking up the articles he had strapped together. "I have something here that I think you would like to see."

"I do not care to buy to-day," said Harry de-



cidedly, "so you had better not waste your time by showing your things."

"But I have something here which I think you would like," the peddler persisted. "It is a very nice rifle, warranted to bring down any game at a distance of ten feet."

Harry was not naturally timid, but she was afraid of firearms, and so drew back when the handsomely mounted rifle was presented for her inspection.

"What do you suppose I want of a gun?" she demanded.

"Ladies are sometimes very fond of them," he replied. "Let me show you how to load. You put the shot in that" —

"I don't care how it is loaded," interrupted Harry. "I never expect to go gunning, as any one with sense would know."

Even this withering remark did not crush the peddler.

"Would n't you like a little rifle practice?" he inquired. "Put a board on that tree to serve for a mark. You would find it very amusing, I think."

"I don't think I shall try to find out whether



it is amusing or not," said Harry scornfully. "Girls can find something to do besides shooting off guns, if boys can't."

"I thought women wanted equal rights with men," said the peddler. "You should practice, to show that you can shoot as well as we can."

"We may want equal rights," replied Harry, "but we are too sensible to indulge in all their foolish habits."

"Then you think hunting is foolish?"

"I think it is cruel," declared Harry, "and I would n't buy a gun for anything; so you need n't spend your time trying to coax me."

"Perhaps this lady will," for Kezia, hearing voices, had come to the door.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" she demanded, sharply eying the young stranger.

"I am your humble servant, ma'am," said he, taking off his hat and bowing low. "I only ask a few minutes of your time to look at my wares. This is a first-class rifle, warranted to kill" —

"Mercy on us!" cried Kezia, throwing her apron over her head. "Don't you point that thing at me."

"It won't go off, madam, unless I pull the





“Who are you, and what do you want?”







trigger." The young man's dark eyes danced with mischief as he rested his gun against his shoulder, and pointed the muzzle straight at Miss Wilder's head.

"Oh! oh! Don't you fire that thing on this place," cried Kezia. "Where is my broom?"

Whether she wanted the broom for self-defense, or intended to drive the peddler off with it was never known, for just then Bertha and Ella came up the lane. The sun was in Ella's eyes, so that at first she could not see the group by the steps, but when she got into the shadow she sprang forward with a glad cry, and seized hold of the peddler by both hands.

"Clifford Preston!" she exclaimed. "Where did you come from?"

"Right from the Hub, ma'am," he replied. "Where the east wind bloweth; the potato groweth; and the voice of the codfish is heard in the land. Are n't you awfully glad to see me?"

"Who told you you might come?" she demanded.

"The old lady. She entreated me to come down and see that nothing happened to you and Auntie Moore."



"What a story!" cried Ella. "I imagine that you gave mamma no peace, and when school closed she was glad to get rid of you. Have you asked Bertha if she will have mercy upon you, and take you in?"

The others stood watching the brother and sister in laughing surprise. Harry had sunk speechless on the doorstep on learning that the vender of firearms was the glorious Clifford Preston she had heard so much about, while Kezia stood ready to run if the terrible rifle showed any signs of going off.

At his sister's question Clifford turned to Bertha, cap in hand, and said coaxingly, —

"You won't turn me weary and foot-sore from your door, will you?"

"It would be decidedly cruel," she replied. "We are told to entertain strangers, so there ought not to be any doubt about cousins."

"Don't be rash, Bertha," warned Ella. "You have no idea what an appetite he has."

"Now that is a libel," he declared in an injured tone. "I don't care anything about eating after dinner, and never dispose of more than a dozen doughnuts at a time."



"You must consult Kezia on the subject of rations," said Ella. "Will you undertake to cook all the delicacies my brother's feeble constitution requires?"

"That lady and I are first-rate friends already," said Clifford, turning to Kezia. "She is a good judge of firearms, and was on the point of buying my rifle when you came along and spoiled the trade."

"If you are coming here to stop I hope you won't bring that thing into the house," said Kezia, keeping a doubtful eye on the rifle.

"You ought to buy this to keep off tramps," he replied. "It is better than a broom. See me knock that pail off the well curb," and the mischievous boy placed his rifle against his shoulder, at which awful sight Kezia threw her apron over her head and ran into the house.

"Now, Clifford Preston," said his sister, "if you don't behave yourself I shall send you back to Boston on the next train."

"Did you ever see such tyranny?" he demanded, turning to the others. "When I am going to vote in two years too, and am captain of Company B. Here, sis, take my traps in-



to the house; I am going to find my Cousin Joe."

"That is the way he has been spoiled," said Ella, as her brother laid his baggage at her feet. "They have all bowed down and worshiped him ever since he made his advent, solely because he is the only male representative of the family."

"And am but a broken staff to lean upon at that," he added in a plaintive tone. "Where is Auntie Moore? Don't tell her I am here, for joy and surprise at seeing me may move her to tip."

"I will promise," said Ella, "and let her enjoy her present peace and quiet as long as possible."

"Where shall I find Joe?" asked Clifford. "Give me my bearings and I'll ferret him out."

"He is in the barn," said Bertha. "You will have no difficulty in finding that."

Clifford started off, and walked in on Joe just as he was in the act of tying up the cows.

"Hello!" said Clifford, pausing in the door.

Joe stared as though he saw an apparition in the form of the handsome, well-dressed young fellow who had appeared so suddenly, and replied rather doubtfully, "Hello yourself."

"I take it you don't know me," said the new-



comer advancing; "but we are cousins, so give us a shake."

"Are you Cliff Preston?" asked Joe rather ungraciously, for he had a prejudice against the Boston fellow who did n't have to work for a living.

"I make out to be," replied the owner of that name. "And you are Joe White, I take it. How are you, old fellow?"

Joe came round and shook hands, but he did not fancy the city boy's walking in and finding him at his work. He was sensitive in regard to the difference in their positions, and had no doubt but that the city boy would look down on a fellow whom he found tying up cows.

But if Clifford had any such feeling he did not show it, for he began at once to make plans in regard to hunting and fishing with his cousin on most friendly terms.

Fishing is one topic on which boys in any station of life can meet on equal terms, and Joe soon forgot that his cousin was well-dressed, with shining collar and cuffs, while he was in his shirt sleeves and overalls; and when Harry came out to call them to supper, she found Clifford seated on



the ladder leading up into the haymow, engaged in an earnest discussion with Joe, who was on the milking stool, busily milking his father's cows.

"You will be late to supper if you don't hurry," said she, standing in the wide barn door, and looking from one boy to the other.

"I say, Cousin Harry," said Clifford, getting off the ladder and approaching her, "do you always treat peddlers the way you did me?"

"A real peddler would n't be so silly as to try and sell guns to a girl," said she, tossing her head.

"I thought first I would be an umbrella mender," he replied. "What would you have done in that case?"

"I would n't have treated you any better," she declared, "for I can't bear peddlers of any kind."

"Then I'll never pretend to be one again," said he. "If Ella had n't appeared when she did that old lady would have driven me off with her broomstick. Do you suppose she will give me any supper?"

"You can come up to the house and see," said Harry graciously. "Supper is nearly ready."



The three started for the house, Joe bearing a brimming pail of milk in either hand.

Kezia met them at the kitchen door.

"Now, don't slop water all over the floor," said she as Joe brought out wash basin and towels. "Your pa washed without spattering a drop, but I might as well talk to the wind as to you."

"Be easy on a fellow, Kezia," pleaded Joe, making a great splashing in the sink. "Pa's a widower, and knows if he is n't careful he won't get another wife."

"Joseph White!" cried Kezia, turning on him threateningly, "if you have over any more of your nonsense not another popover will you get out of me. It is bad enough to have to live with a widower without his own son making talk."

Meanwhile Clifford had followed Harry into the dining room, where the family were just gathering round the table. At sight of her nephew Miss Moore uttered a slight scream.

"Clifford Preston!" she exclaimed. "How came you here?"

"I came to see you, auntie," said he, gallantly saluting her cheek. "I could n't live without



you any longer. Just see how thin I have grown since we parted!"

The lady's lips relaxed into a slight smile. It was evident that her nephew was the idol of her heart.

"Why did you take us by surprise?" she asked. "You should have sent word you were coming."

"Could not stop to telegraph," he replied. "Knew you were pining to see me, so tore down here as fast as I could."

"How long has he been here, Ella?" she asked, turning to her niece.

"I found him on the steps when I came home," she replied. "Clifford, you have not spoken to Mr. White. Cousin John, this is my brother."

Mr. White shook hands with the boy, giving him a warm welcome.

"He is taller than Joe," said he, looking from one to the other. "You must hurry and catch up with him, my son."

"Poor Joe is n't long for this world," said Clifford with a profound sigh, patting his cousin on the shoulder.

"You got the start of me by two years," replied



Joe. "You wait and see if I am not as long as you by the time I 'm twenty-one."

"Company drill gives boys fine figures," observed Miss Moore. "All Boston boys carry themselves well."

"Auntie Moore thinks Boston is located in the region of paradise," said her nephew saucily, "and that the Garden of Eden was near Back Bay, and afterwards submerged. Say, auntie, won't we have fine times fishing and hunting?"

"I hope you have n't brought that dreadful gun," said she.

"Why, of course I have," he replied. "You people will live on game while I am here."

"You need n't expect me to cook your game," spoke up Kezia.

Firearms was a subject on which Kezia and Miss Moore could agree.

After supper, when Joe's work was done, the two boys were out on the front steps with Harry, when Ella appeared.

"Come, boys," said she, "it is time to start for meeting."

"Hope you don't think I 'm going," said Joe in that superior tone boys are fond of using toward



things in which they do not care to show their interest.

"Of course you are going," Ella declared. "We won't let you stay at home."

"And be the only boy?" retorted Joe. "No ma'am, not by a long chalk."

"You won't be the only boy," said Ella. "Cliff is going, and Mr. Murry will be there."

"J. Murry don't count," said Joe with a grin. "He is n't a boy."

"Indeed, Mr. Murry does count," replied Ella decidedly. "You don't begin to appreciate him as you ought."

"What are they talking about?" Clifford asked Harry. "Where does Ella want Joe to go?"

"A great event takes place to-night," replied Harry. "We are going to have our first Endeavor meeting."

"We have our Endeavor meetings Monday evenings," said Clifford. "It will seem real natural to go."

"Do you belong?" asked Harry in surprise, for it had never occurred to her that boys like Clifford joined Endeavor societies.



"Why, yes, of course," he replied. "Don't you?"

"I am an associate member," said she. "Ella has just started ours, and we are going to have our first meeting to-night."

"That is just like Ella," said Clifford proudly. "You 'll like it, for they are lots of help."

"Are you an active member?" asked Harry timidly.

"Oh, yes," he replied. "I 'm awfully glad you have one down here, for I tell you I miss 'em when I can't go, for they are lots of help towards keeping a fellow straight."

"I wish you had your cornet here, Cliff," said his sister. "It would be such a help in the singing. I depend a great deal on that."

"I should think you would know that I wouldn't venture so far from home without my cornet," said he in a hurt tone. "What solace would I have for my weary hours without it?"

"You blessed boy!" cried his sister. "You were a jewel to bring it. It will come right in play this evening."

"Will they have a drum, tambourine, and the rest of the Salvation Army orchestra?" he inquired.



"No," she replied; "only an organ, dreadfully out of tune, and your cornet."

"Who will play the organ?" he asked.

"I will; so go and get your cornet, and I will tell you what hymns we have selected."

The brother and sister went into the house, leaving Joe and Harry alone.

"How do you like him?" asked the boy.

"I don't know," replied the girl. "You might have knocked me over with a feather when he said he was an active member."

"Me too," replied Joe. "He is the last one I should take for a religious chap."

A "religious chap" in Joe's deluded imagination, was a solemn, sanctimonious youth, shunned by all his companions, and standing outside of all boyish fun, as unlike Clifford Preston as one could well be. So it was no wonder that the young man surprised him.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## NAN'S FIRST ENDEAVOR.

CLIFFORD would have been surprised to have learned how he had astonished his cousins, as he walked between them to the vestry with his cornet case in his hand.

Joe had intended to go to the meeting all the time, in spite of the answer he had given Ella, but he had expected to do as the other youths of the village did, hang round the door until the meeting began, and then slip into the back seat, and perhaps not keep as orderly and quiet as could be wished. The young gentlemen of his acquaintance were already there in a row on the railing when they reached the vestry, but Clifford showed not the slightest intention of lingering among them, and Joe was obliged to follow him right into the vestry.

The room was very well filled, and looked pleas-



ant and cheerful. It seemed to Ella as though even the lights burned better than usual.

Mr. Murry came forward to meet them.

"Is n't this encouraging?" said he. "I think we are going to have a good meeting."

"I have brought another helper," said Ella. "My brother, Mr. Murry."

"She made me bring my cornet," said he after shaking hands. "I don't suppose she consulted any one else, for she seems to have everything her own way here."

"It is right welcome, I assure you," said Mr. Murry warmly. "It is just what we need to lead the singing."

The newcomers were the center of all eyes, and when Harry took her seat among the girls she was eagerly questioned.

"Who is he? When did he come? Is he going to stay?"

"Is n't he handsome!" said Emma Baker with a sentimental sigh. "You'll give me an introduction, won't you, Harry?"

No wonder Clifford roused a good deal of interest in the girls, for their acquaintances were youths who sat on the fence outside, and would have no



more advanced to the front of the room and taken a seat among the girls than they would have committed suicide.

John Murry, who was to lead, seated himself by the red-covered stand. Ella placed herself at the organ, and the meeting was opened. Of course there was a great deal of singing, and, led by the cornet, it was so inspiring that every one felt like joining.

When the meeting was thrown open, Ella left the organ and took a seat beside Nan Winters, who had separated herself from the other girls, and sat in the corner with her Bible open on her lap. Ella knew that she would need help in making her first public confession, and took her place beside her with an encouraging smile.

The testimonies were prompt, though brief. Harry and Joe could not tell which impressed them the most, the few earnest words Bertha spoke, or the sight of Clifford on his feet giving his earnest testimony to the love of Christ.

Nan spoke six words, and no one but Ella knew what an effort they cost her. Again and again she opened her lips, but her voice would not come. Afraid that her courage would fail her altogether,



Ella took her Bible, and, opening it in a new place, pointed out one line in it. Nan saw it, and in a low voice repeated, without rising: —

“ ‘In God put I my trust.’ ”

That was all; but those acquainted with the girl knew it meant a great deal.

Before he closed the meeting Mr. Murry asked all present to remain to a social gathering, for Ella believed in hand shaking. In her own society a great many young strangers were drawn in and welcomed during the five or ten minutes social at the close; but now as soon as the Mizpah benediction was repeated the boys in the back seat vanished as if by magic, and the girls soon followed, so only the active members remained in a little knot in the middle of the room.

“O Miss Preston!” Nan exclaimed, “you don’t know how you helped me! I had an awful dream last night. I thought I went to the meeting and did not take part, and Mr. Smith told me that I was not fit to be an active member, and that I had better take my name off and go home. It was such a relief to wake up and find it all a dream, though if it had not been for you, I am afraid it would have come true.”



"Oh, I don't believe that!" declared Ella. "Hard as it was, you would have conquered."

"I 'm afraid not," Nan replied. "I had a verse selected, and thought of something to say, but I could n't find my voice; it was gone. It is so hard, I 'm afraid I will break my pledge, and then Mr. Smith will turn me out."

"Mr. Smith shall not do anything of the kind," said Ella decidedly. "Let me whisper something to you, Nan,—ask Jesus to help you. He will make it easier."

"I will; I will," said Nan eagerly. "He sent you to help me to-night."

"I 'm so glad," said Ella, giving Nan's hand a little squeeze as she bade her good night.

"Did n't we have a glorious meeting?" said Mr. Murry to Bertha, as he gathered up his books. "Miss Preston advised me to keep it only three quarters of an hour, but an hour had gone before I realized it."

"It surprised me," replied Bertha. "I never went to a meeting I enjoyed so much before."

"We don't know what good prayer meetings are down here," said Mr. Murry. "Did you see how interested those girls seemed?"



"Yes," replied Bertha. "I am surprised to see how much good our effort has done already."

"I feel condemned to think we did n't make the effort before," Mr. Murry replied. "If it had not been for your cousin we would not have made one now. Here she comes. How do you feel, Miss Preston?"

"As the Methodists do when they shout hallelujah," she replied. "But how do you feel, my doubting Thomas?"

"I am a doubting Thomas no longer," Bertha replied. "But I can't understand it."

" 'According to your faith be it unto you,' " quoted Mr. Murry. "That is the promise to us. What we want is faith."

"Yes, and works," added Ella. "If they go hand in hand we shall have glorious results."

The next morning Clifford rose betimes, eager to start at once for the woods. He had come down there to hunt and fish, and wanted to be off as soon as possible. Joe seconded him, and Mr. White indulgently told his son that he might have the rest of the week, and take a little vacation until haying time.



"I should think you might stay here one day," said Ella at the breakfast table, "before you go off into the woods."

"To be eaten up by mosquitoes," added Harry. "You 'll be such frights when you get back that we won't know you."

"Then I 'll pass myself off for a tramp instead of a peddler," said Clifford. "Do you drive tramps off with your broomstick, Kezia?"

"You won't fool me again," declared Kezia. "I 'd know you now if you tried to make me think you was a wild Injun."

"I hope you are not thinking of taking your rifle, Clifford," said Miss Moore. "It is not prudent."

"I could n't think of leaving it behind me, auntie," he replied. "How would I get that rabbit for your stew without it?"

"I do not care for wild animal food," replied the lady. "It is not palatable."

"Now, auntie, if you don't eat my game I shall be awfully disappointed;" said Clifford; "when I 'm going hunting just to please you, too."

"Don't worry, auntie," said Ella. "He won't hurt anything by shooting at it, and we won't have to ruin our digestion by eating his game."



"That is a libel, but I scorn to notice it," said Clifford loftily.

"I know something you folks would like," said Joe, grinning over his coffee cup, "and that is eels. They are jolly skinned and fried."

Miss Moore nearly fainted at this, and Bertha threatened to send her brother from the table if he said any more on the subject.

After breakfast the two boys started down town to invite a chum of Joe's to make one of their party. As they walked along, Joe was conscious that he did not appear to advantage beside his cousin, whom company drill had made as erect as a young sapling, and who carried himself with an ease and grace which made Joe painfully aware that he slouched. Joe envied the Boston boy his well-fitting clothes and easy manners, but rather resented the latter, as jealousy is apt to do.

On reaching the village they met Nan Winters out on a morning errand, with a basket on her arm. Clifford stepped behind Joe as they met on the narrow plank walk, and as the boy and girl exchanged "Helloes," after the custom of the country, he silently touched his cap.

"What did you do that for?" demanded Joe, as



Nan passed out of hearing. "You don't know her."

"No; but you spoke to her," Clifford replied.

"What if I did?" retorted Joe. "You had no right to."

"I did n't," said Clifford, laughing. "I only touched my cap because she was a young lady of your acquaintance. I should n't have if I had met her alone of course."

"I suppose it is one of your city airs," said Joe with something like a sneer.

"What are you so peppery about, Joseph?" asked Clifford good-naturedly. "I did n't do anything out of the way."

"I ain't used to city airs," retorted Joe.

Clifford's dark eyes flashed, and a sarcastic, "I 'm not used to country awkwardness," rose to his lips, but he bit back the words, and, after a pause, said instead,—

"Does your chum own a dog?"

Joe was ashamed of himself, and glad enough to change the subject, so he launched into a description of his friend's canine property, and peace was again restored.

But the incident was not forgotten. And



though nothing would have induced Joe to lift his hat to woman or girl, he envied Clifford the ease with which he did it, and hated himself for his ignorance of the custom which gave Clifford the right to recognize his young lady friends. He supposed the girls liked that sort of thing, but he should feel like a fool doing it.

The girls did like it. Nan thought Clifford's act of courtesy a vast improvement on Joe's blunt "Hello," and wished all the boys would treat the girls that way, instead of singing out that brief American salutation whenever they met.

The boys returned from their trip Saturday night, covered with mosquitoes' bites, tired and sore from their tramp in the woods. Clifford had tanned to a rich Spanish brown, which was not unbecoming, but poor Joe had burned a copper color, and was covered with freckles.

After tea Joe was drawing a pail of water from the mossy old well, with the old-fashioned sweep, when Harry came out.

"How do you like Cliff?" said she, leaning her arms on the curb and looking down into the little mirror framed in by the mossy grotto.



"He 's an odd one," replied Joe, balancing the bucket on the edge; "but he 's tiptop, I tell you."

"Is n't it funny to think he is a Christian?" said Harry, thoughtfully regarding her own image in the still, dark water of the well.

"He 's all right," replied Joe. "There is no make-believe about him."

"I did n't suppose there was," said Harry indignantly. "I knew he was n't a sham."

"I did n't know as it went right through, that night at meeting," said Joe, lowering his voice, "but it does. He carries one of those small Bibles with soft covers in his pocket, and every night he reads in it, and prays."

"And you boys make fun of him, I suppose," said Harry indignantly.

"You bet we don't!" retorted Joe, almost upsetting the bucket in his wrath. "Hope we ain't such cads as to kick a fellow for sticking to his principles!"

"They always do in Sunday-school books," Harry replied.

"Fellows in Sunday-school books are muffs," Joe declared. "Cliff ain't. He 's got a temper



like a black squall. Thought he was going to knock Ned down one day."

"Did he say something to make Cliff mad?" asked Harry curiously.

"It was politics," Joe replied. "Cliff is a red-hot Republican, and Ned is a raving, tearing Democrat, and they kept it going night and morning, and would n't they get hot! It fairly made me sweat to listen to 'em. One day Ned got excited and said something real insulting, which made Cliff turn on him like a tiger. I thought he was going to knock the words down his throat, but, instead of hitting him, he turned and walked off into the woods as fast as he could go, and after that we could n't get him to talk politics because he said it made him mad. What of it if it did? Ned deserved a good thrashing, for he was real aggravating."

"I suppose," said Harry thoughtfully, "that Cliff thinks it is n't right to get mad. The Bible says, 'Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other.'"

"Cliff did n't offer Ned the other cheek," replied Joe, "but he walked off out of sight. He 's a queer chap."



"I should like to know," said Kezia, appearing in the doorway, "whether you are going to bring that water into the house or not, Joseph White."

"You ought not to hurry a fellow, Kezia," replied Joe. "I 'm so stiff in the joints I can hardly move."

"I could draw twenty pails while you are getting one," declared Kezia. "If a circus should come along your joints would be limber enough."

When Harry went into the sitting room, she found the young Christian who fought his Apollyon in the woods, accompanying himself on his sister's banjo, and singing: —

"Down went McGinty to the bottom of the sea,"

for the edification of his aunt, who listened with an indulgent smile.



## CHAPTER IX.

## HAYING TIME.

ONE of the most beautiful of mornings ushered in the next day. As Ella sat by her open window, drinking in the sweet scents which came in on the fresh breeze, it seemed to her as though nature knew that it was Sunday, and was keeping the new day holy. The tinkle of the distant cow-bell had a hushed sound, and the hens scratching for their morning meal clucked softly and decorously to each other.

“ ‘What so rare as a day in June?’ ” murmured Ella, as she leaned out of her window; “and what is more beautiful than a perfect June morning with the Sabbath stillness resting upon it?”

Breakfast was later than usual on the first morning of the week, and as soon as it was over the young people started for Sunday school; all except Bertha, who had given up going long



ago, because she could not get the work done in time.

"I am glad you live so far from the church," said Ella. "I would n't miss the walk for anything."

"You would n't like it in winter," replied Harry, "for the snow drifts here like everything."

"Pity it is n't June all the time," said Clifford, "or some other jolly month."

"I should like to travel," said Harry, "so as to keep it summer all the time."

"You would get tired of the same climate," said Ella. "I like the changes, and love autumn best of all."

"I don't believe any one could get tired of summer," said Harry, taking a deep breath of the sweet air.

"I would, if a fellow had to hay all the time," growled Joe, thinking of what was before him.

When they reached the village they found they were early, so Harry proposed that she and Ella go in after Nan. When they stepped into the hall they found the girl they were in search of engaged upon a task which caused them to pause in astonishment in the doorway. Seated in the



middle of the room were two little girls, whose feet, cased in stout leather boots, swung helplessly some distance from the floor. Behind them stood Nan, brushing and braiding their straight yellow locks, and tying them with bright pieces of ribbon. She nodded gayly at the girls, and asked them to come in.

"Have you opened a barber's shop?" asked Harry curiously.

"Five cents a shave," replied Nan mischievously. "There, Rosy, you are ready. I will give you a round comb, Lily, to keep those short hairs back."

"Who are these young ladies?" asked Ella, regarding the little maids, who held their heads very straight and stiff, as though the new mode of hairdressing prevented their moving them.

"Oh, you don't know that I have taken a class in Sunday-school," replied Nan, brushing Miss Lily's carrot-colored hair.

"Are you going to leave our class, Nan Winters?" demanded Harry.

"I don't want to, Harry," replied Nan. "I don't know enough to teach. I am ashamed to think how little I know about the Bible when I



have been to Sunday school all my life; but Mr. Curtis wanted me to take some little girls, and, as there was n't any one else, I thought I would try. These are two of my scholars, Rosy and Lily Cates."

"I think you are awfully mean to leave our class," pouted Harry. "What shall I do without you?"

"I dare say I shall come back," said Nan, "for perhaps I won't be able to teach them."

"Is this the first process?" asked Ella, much amused.

"Lily and Rosy did n't have any hair ribbons or round combs," said Nan, giving the finishing touches to the two heads, "and I told them if they would come early that I would give them some. There is the bell. I will be ready in a minute.

They all started to the church together, Nan leading the way with a little Cates on either side.

"Miss Preston," said she, when they reached the church door, "you ought to have the children. You would make a better teacher than I."

"I think not. You have already made a better



beginning than I should," said Ella, wondering what would have induced her to have touched the heads of Rosy and Lily Cates.

"How that girl is growing!" she thought to herself, as she watched Nan surrounded by her little ones.

The next morning Mr. White began to cut his grass, to his son Joe's great disgust. He would rather go cruising in the woods with Clifford than spend the long summer days in the hayfield. He imagined Clifford would look down on a fellow who had to spend his vacation haying, and would leave him to join some of his city friends who did n't have to work; but instead, Clifford pulled off his coat, and asked Mr. White to take him for a field hand.

The farmer smiled, and told him he had all the hands he needed, but that he might amuse himself there if he wanted to; so Clifford mounted the mowing machine and drove Bob White up and down the field as steadily as could be desired. Once in a while his spirits ran away with him; but his tricks were always taken in good part, for Clifford was a boy that made himself a favorite everywhere.



Even Kezia was won by the black-eyed boy, and would put him up a lunch to go fishing whenever he wanted one, and let him litter up her kitchen with his whittling without making a single complaint.

But she did not escape the boy's tricks.

One rainy day he and Joe spent the afternoon manufacturing a dummy out of a broomstick, which they adorned with portions of their own wardrobes.

After dark Kezia heard a double knock at the kitchen door, and, on opening it, discovered a singular-looking gentleman, with his hat drawn down onto his head, waiting on the step. Receiving no answer to her inquiries from the stranger, she brought the lamp to bear upon him, and discovered the trick.

"It's the work of those good-for-nothing boys," said she, raising her voice; for she had detected a stifled giggle in the direction of the well-curb. "If I could get hold of 'em they 'd ketch it. It's no more fresh doughnuts they 'll get out of me."

And yet this consistent woman baked a lemon pie for those same good-for-nothing boys the very next day.



They lived out-of-doors, and one afternoon Harry and the boys coaxed Bertha and Ella to ride on the hay, and a merry load drove into the barn behind Bob White. Bertha felt as though she had grown young again, and Miss Moore was dreadfully shocked as she saw her niece go off in the empty hay cart, with her sailor hat on the back of her head, and hayseed sticking to her dress and hair, looking more like a girl of sixteen than a young lady of twenty-five.

Even Kezia was coaxed into taking a ride in the hay cart. One afternoon she put on her sun-bonnet to go out and get some of the strawberries which were so plenty in the swaths of grass, just as Joe and Clifford drove out of the barn with the empty hayrick. They coaxed her to get in and drive out with them, and, making an opening in the cart behind, helped her to mount.

"Now, mind you don't upset me," said Kezia doubtfully, as Clifford braced himself on his sturdy young legs and took up the reins.

"No; I 'll drive as slow as a funeral procession," he promised, as Joe jumped up behind. "You 'll never have a better ride in your life, Kezia."





HAYING-TIME.







"I used to ride on the hay when I was a gal," she replied, "but I 'm getting too old for such things now."

"Nonsense, Kezia! you are not old," said Clifford gallantly. "You are young enough to come back on the top of the load that Joe and I are going to haul in."

"Get out with your nonsense!" retorted Kezia. "You know I 'm a homely old woman; but I ain't ashamed to own it, like some folks I know."

"Well," said Mr. White, as they drove up with their passenger, "whom are you going to bring out next?"

"Auntie Moore has engaged a passage on the next train," replied Clifford, "so you had better get ready to receive her."

In the long June twilights they gathered on the steps, or under the apple trees, where Clifford usually entertained them by singing comic songs, accompanied by his sister's banjo.

"I 'm glad there are no near neighbors," said Ella one night, "for I don't know what they would think of us."

Clifford had been entertaining them with specimens of the college yells which waken the echoes of old Boston.



"This is Harvard," said he, illustrating in a way which caused Miss Moore to cover up her ears.

"What do they have a yell for?" asked Harry. "I don't see the sense of it."

"Why, it is the most important thing of all," Clifford replied. "As soon as a college is founded the dignitaries meet to decide on a yell."

"Clifford Preston!" exclaimed his sister, "you ought to be ashamed to tell such stories. Fortunately your auditors have too much sense to believe them."

"Now, what have I done?" asked Clifford in an injured tone. "I'm sure the yell is the first thing you hear from a college."

Harry and Joe were imitating Clifford's performance with such success that Bertha echoed Ella's remark, that it was well there were no near neighbors.

And yet this boy had led the Endeavor meeting the evening before, and his straightforward earnestness inspired the deepest respect among the young people.

The society continued to be a success, and,



though they had no addition to their numbers, the meetings were well attended and interesting.

"I look forward to Monday evening with pleasure," said Bertha to Ella one day.

"You can't say now that you are sorry I started the society," Ella replied.

"No, indeed," said she earnestly. "This summer has been the happiest of my life. I feel five years younger since you came. I believe I was growing old before my time."

"You surely were," replied Ella. "I wish you could go back with me for a visit."

"Impossible," said Bertha with a smile. "What would become of father and the children?"

"Leave them to Kezia's care."

"We can't afford to keep Kezia after you go," said Bertha frankly. "We shall settle down to our old humdrum life again then."

Ella sighed. Her cousin's lot seemed very hard and narrow to her, and she wished there was some way by which she could brighten it for her.

One day Nan came out to the Whites' and begged Harry to go with her while she paid a



visit to Lily Cates, who had cut her foot while playing with her father's ax. It was a cloudy day, and as Bob White was not in the hayfield they harnessed him to the wagon and jogged off. The house where the Cates lived was situated in a field some little distance from the village. The girls fastened Bob White to the fence, and walked up the lane leading to the bare, unpainted building. The door was open into the kitchen, and, warm summer day as it was, there was a fire in the cook stove, over which an old woman sat smoking the black stump of a clay pipe. As they paused in the doorway, gasping for breath in the foul air, the old woman rose, and with the pipe still in her mouth asked them in.

On inquiring for Lily, she showed them into an inner room, where, on a rude bed, covered with a ragged, dirty patchwork quilt, the poor little girl lay, hot and feverish.

She was glad to see her teacher, but the girls did not enjoy their call very much, for the old woman's pipe made them sick, as she sat by the bed answering their questions about the accident; and, not seeing anything they could do for the child, they talked with her a little while, show-



ing her the gay paper dolls Nan had made, then bade her good-by, and went out.

“Oh!” said Harry as they drew in the sweet, pure air once more, “I never knew how nice it was to breathe before!”

“Think of living there!” added Nan. “I’m afraid Lily will die.”

Their faces were very sober as they thought of the scene they had just left; but on reaching the end of the lane their thoughts were turned into a new channel by finding Bob White with his nose pointed towards home, and Joe and Clifford on the wagon seat.

“Where did you come from?” Harry demanded.

“Glad to find you are in command,” replied Joe. “I thought old Daddy Cates had stolen Bob White.”

“Whom have you been calling on, girls?” asked Clifford, jumping out of the wagon.

“Some of Nan’s little kids live here,” said Joe. “Nan looks like the old woman in the shoe Sunday mornings.”

“You would n’t walk a mile to go to Sunday school, as those children do,” retorted Nan. “I don’t wonder they wear out so many shoes.”



"I would if I could be in your class," declared Joe. "Try me and see."

"I would n't have you for anything," Nan replied. "You boys act horrid in Sunday school."

"We are lambs compared to you girls," Joe retorted. "You and Harry used to keep the whole class in a titter."

"You had better get out of the wagon," ordered Harry. "There is n't room for you to ride home."

"We'll jump in behind," said Clifford. "We want to get home in time to clean our fish before supper."

"Those mean little chubs are not worth carrying home," said Harry, disdainfully regarding their spoils.

"Kezia has promised to cook everything I catch, from an eel to a whale," he replied; "but I won't go shares if you make fun of my fish."

"I believe if you shot a porcupine you would want it cooked," Harry declared.

"No, I'd have it stuffed," he replied, "and hung on the wall for an ornament."

"Whom did you see at Daddy Cates'?" asked



Joe, as he and Clifford sat in the back of the wagon with their legs hanging out behind. "If you give all your girls messes when they are sick, they won't any of 'em be well enough to go to Sunday school."

"I guess you would be sick if you lived the way Lily does," said Nan indignantly; and she and Harry gave an eloquent description of what they had seen that afternoon.

Of course the boys did not express any sympathy, for it is not boy nature to show their feelings when touched; but when Clifford helped Nan out of the wagon at her own gate, he slipped some silver pieces into her hand, and said, hurriedly:—

"Get some oranges and bananas for the little girl; she may like them," and hastily touching his cap he jumped back into the wagon, leaving Nan to say privately, "That Clifford Preston is a nice boy."



## CHAPTER X.

## CAMPING OUT.

THE weather was so fine that Mr. White got through haying unusually early, and when the last load was put into the barn the boys proposed that they all go camping out for a week.

Harry was wild at the idea; Ella readily consented; but Bertha hung back.

"I never camped out in my life," said she one afternoon when the question was being discussed.

"There has to be a first time to everything," said Ella gayly, "and if you have never camped out there is all the more reason you should now."

"Your education has been sadly neglected if you have never camped out," said Clifford gravely.

"It is a duty you owe your family to go, for you should always make the most of your opportunities."

"But what will become of the house?" objected Bertha.



"It won't run away," Clifford declared. "I'll guarantee to have it here when you come back."

"But the people in it," said Bertha, "who will look after them?"

"There won't be many left," laughed Ella. "I'm sure Auntie Moore and Kezia can take care of each other."

"You have too high an opinion of your own importance, Bertha," said Clifford gravely. "I'm sure you can be spared, and that Auntie Moore will be glad to get rid of you, won't you, auntie?"

"I do not approve of camping-out parties," said Miss Moore with dignity, "though of course I have nothing to say about Bertha. I think it is very imprudent for Ella to think of such a thing. What would the doctor say if he knew?"

"That it was the best thing I could do," said Ella promptly. "It would be just what he would prescribe for Bertha if he could see her pale cheeks."

"I'm quite sure that I can't go," said Bertha soberly, "for some one must stay at home and look out for things."

"Harry can do that," said Clifford mischiev-



ously. "She would love to stay at home and keep house."

"It is useless to joke," said Bertha with a slight sigh. "I can't go, so please say no more about it."

"I should like to know, Bertha White," cried Kezia, turning round from the window where she sat knitting, "if you think I ain't capable of taking care of this family for a week? If I ain't, I had better pack up and go home."

"Of course you could manage beautifully, Kezia," said Ella. "None of us doubt that. You would be glad to get rid of us for a week, I know."

"And could bake up a lot of goodies against our return," said Clifford with a saucy wink.

"Of course I don't doubt your capability, Kezia," said Bertha apologetically, "but I don't think I ought to leave when I am housekeeper."

"I should think I never kept house," sniffed Kezia, "instead of being at it before you was born."

"That 's it, Kezia!" cried Clifford. "Stand up for your rights. Let 's put her out and take command of the ship;" and seizing Bertha, chair



and all, he tried to carry her out of the room, until she screamed for mercy, so that he was glad to drop her.

"Look here!" said Joe, pulling off his straw hat as he came into the room. "Who is going? That 's what I want to find out."

"We all are," Ella replied. "Kezia is going to drive Bertha out of her own house."

"Nan must go," said Harry, "for I don't want to be the only girl."

"What!" cried Ella, facing round on her.

"Only young girl, I mean," corrected Harry mischievously.

"Do you see, Bertha," said Ella gravely, "that we are considered old girls?"

"Old maids," Clifford explained.

"I 'm used to that," said Bertha with a sigh. "I have been called old ever since I was young."

"The tent won't hold five hundred," said Joe. "Where do you think we are going to stow forty girls?"

"We must have two tents," Harry declared; "one on purpose for us."

"I asked Ned to come along," Joe made answer, "and perhaps he will let us have his tent."



"I suppose he does n't count in the five hundred," said Harry. "Might have known that you could n't get along without Ned."

"That red-hot free-trade Democrat is going, is he?" said Clifford, wrinkling his brows.

"He must take his tent," said Ella, "and leave his politics at home."

"He makes seven," said Harry, counting on her fingers. "We ought to ask one more, so as to make an even number."

"Invite John Murry, to keep the old maids company," suggested Clifford.

"Clifford Preston!" cried his sister. "If I was n't too lazy I 'd box your ears."

"You like little John," retorted Clifford, "and would like to have him, you know. I 'll keep mum and not mention his name in the letters I write to report your conduct."

"I think it would be very nice to have Mr. Murry," said Ella serenely. "Suppose you ask him, Joe."

"A fellow don't like to have his dominie when he 's going off on a cruise," objected Joe.

"Mr. Murry will forget his scholastic duties up in the woods," said Ella, "and be as nice as any boy."



"It is time to make the kitchen fire, Joe," said Bertha, glancing at the clock. "Please hurry, for we have got to make biscuits."

"I can't go near any of the women folks without being ordered to go to work," grumbled Joe. "They have n't any mercy on a fellow."

"You 'll have to chop some kindlings," replied Bertha serenely, "so hurry;" and with a groan Joe departed for the woodshed.

One bright morning, a few days after, a large truck wagon, loaded with all sort of things, stood at Mr. White's door. A long rowboat was securely lashed on, and under and around it were quilts, blankets, cooking utensils, baskets, and a small oil stove. A double-seated wagon stood beside it, in which were the tents in canvas bags, more baskets, tin pails, a coffeepot, and a frying-pan.

At seven o'clock John Murry made his appearance with his gun over his shoulder, a huge basket in his hand; and a little later Ned and Nan trudged up the lane, the latter in scarlet and gray boating suit and broad-brimmed hat.

The girls were all dressed in rough-and-ready



costumes able to stand the wear and tear of camping-out life. Ella had on a yachting suit of blue and white, with blouse waist, sash, and sailor hat. Bertha, who had no dress suitable for such an excursion, had, with Ella's help, gotten up a combination suit, consisting of a blue flannel skirt, gay red waist, and little blue and white cap of her cousin's, which costume changed her to such a degree that John Murry looked at her in surprise. Harry reveled in a partly outgrown sailor suit which only reached to the tops of her boots and left her free in a way that rejoiced her heart.

The whole family gathered at the front of the house to see them start. Even Kezia left her work, and Miss Moore rose earlier than usual to witness the departure.

Mr. White was to drive the girls in the wagon to the shore of the lake, from whence he would bring the teams back; and the boys and Mr. Murry were to ride on the truck wagon. They were all ready at last, waiting for Clifford, who had gone into the house for something.

At last he came out, and, throwing himself on his knees before Miss Moore, said imploringly, "Give me your blessing, auntie, before I go."



"Come, Cliff," called Joe, "we have n't time for any of your monkey shines."

"Remember I am the staff of the family," said Clifford, wiping his eyes, "and am only a frail and broken reed."

"It is a foolhardy undertaking to camp out in the woods," said Miss Moore, "and if I were your mother I would not let you go."

"Don't lie awake worrying about us," said Clifford. "I 'll take care of Ella, and bring you home a live porcupine for a pet. Good-by, auntie," and throwing both arms about her in a suffocating embrace, he then leaped into the truck wagon, and the merry party rattled down the lane, waving their hats and handkerchiefs.

The drive to the lake was for the most of the way through the woods, but once in a while they would come out into a cleared tract of land, whence they obtained a fine view of the surrounding country. Women living in the scattered farmhouses rushed to the windows to see them go by, and the men in the hayfield leaned on their rakes and watched them with cheerful interest.

It was past eleven when they reached their first stopping-place, on the shore of a large lake, around



which was a little settlement, consisting of a few houses and a sawmill, now busily humming. They drove their teams over a rustic bridge to where their progress was stopped by a pair of bars leading into a field.

It was a lovely spot. On one side the blue waters of the lake, shut in by wooded shores, rippled in the sunshine; on the other, the little stream, which flowed noisily under the bridge and turned the wheel of the sawmill, wound in and out among the green banks as far as the eye could reach. On a knoll above the stream was a beautiful hard-wood grove, carpeted with green moss and scarlet bunchberries, which the girls fell to picking as soon as they were out of the wagon.

"We had better have dinner here, I think," said Bertha. "Father will want something to eat before he starts for home."

They all agreed, and while John and Mr. White attended to the horses, the girls spread the tablecloth up in the grove. When dinner was ready a loud toot of the horn they had brought called them all together, and they had a merry meal out under the trees.

After dinner the boys took the boat off the



wagon, and launched it in the stream. While they were loading it with their housekeeping utensils the mill stopped humming, and a man and his two sons walked slowly down to the shore.

"The twelve o'clock whistle has blown," said Clifford. "All hands knock off work. No strikes for ten hours' work in this mill."

"Going blueberrying, Mr. White?" asked the mill man, watching the boys, with his hands in his pockets.

"I 'm not," replied Mr. White, "but these young folks are starting off on a cruise."

"You 'll find 'em pretty thick on the heath," observed the mill man.

"But you can't get nothing for 'em," added his son; "only ten cents a quart in money."

"Think it will pay us?" asked Clifford gravely.

"Dunno. There 's a good many to share the profits," and he ran his eye in a calculating manner over the group.

"I think there will be blueberries enough for us all," said John Murry. "Look out for that bundle, Joe; it will go overboard."

The mill man and his sons watched with deep



interest as the party stowed themselves into the heavily laden boat.

"If we run aground we 'll have to throw out the cargo," said Clifford as he pushed off the boat and then jumped into the bow. They floated off, gayly waving their hats and handkerchiefs to those left on the shore. Ned, who had navigated the stream before, held the rudder, while John and Joe, with Harry and Nan, pulled at the oars. Bertha and Ella nestled under their sunshades, while Clifford, in the bow, warbled a sentimental serenade, assuring them that he was "only a pansy blossom," until the girls requested John to quietly put him overboard.

The stream made a winding course up among the woods, and once in a while they ran into a tangled mass of lily leaves; and, in reaching after the snow-white flowers, Clifford would have taken a header into the deep, if Joe had not clutched him in the rear.

At last they ran the boat up onto a sandy shore, and, disembarking, found themselves in an open clearing, surrounded by a grand old forest.

"Half-past two," said John, looking at his watch. "We shall have to work lively to get things ready before supper time."



"Hope you don't expect me to work without something to eat!" exclaimed Clifford. "I 'm utterly exhausted, and nothing will revive me but one of Kezia's cheese cakes."

"Don't let him have one!" cried Nan. "We must make the boys understand that they must not eat all the time."

"If that is n't cruel, after the way I 've worked for you to-day," said Clifford in an aggrieved tone.

"You did n't row half of the way, and can't show a blister like that," said Harry, proudly showing the palm of her hand.

"Girls can't row half a mile without raising a blister," he retorted. "But I must have a cheese cake to restore famished nature."

"Don't let him have one, Harry!" screamed Nan, as Clifford made a raid on the basket.

Harry seized it and ran into the woods, with Clifford in hot pursuit. In the chase which followed Clifford was successful, and returned munching a cheese cake, while Harry came back pouting and scolding.

"I wish you would set him to work, Mr. Murry," said she, "so as to keep him out of mischief."



"Take the hatchet and clear away the underbrush," said John; "that will keep you busy for a while."

Clifford sat on a stump and finished his cake, then went to work with the others, while Harry and Nan counted the remaining cakes and hid the basket.

They soon had the tents up; and, while the girls were arranging them, the boys, under John's direction, constructed a table. The girls' tent was called the drawing-room, and looked very pretty when everything was arranged, and they finished decorating it with ferns, bunchberries, and flowers. The other tent was the kitchen, where all the cooking utensils were kept and most of the food.

After supper they built a bonfire, and, rolling up a mossy log, which they covered with the girls' shawls to serve for a sofa, they all gathered around it and sang songs, for Ella had brought her banjo, and Clifford and John entertained them with college stories.

At nine o'clock Clifford took out his pocket Bible, and read by the light of the fire: —

" 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.' "



The red glow of the fire lit up the dim woods, and flickered over Clifford's earnest, handsome face as he read. No other sound broke the stillness but the ripple of the waters on the sandy beach. Mr. Murry followed the reading with a short, earnest prayer; then they sang their favorite Endeavor hymn, and carefully putting out the fire they bade each other good night, and left the wonderful night to itself.



## CHAPTER XI.

## CLIFFORD MEETS APOLLYON.

IT was impossible for the girls to go quietly to sleep in their strange quarters, and long after the noise had subsided in the adjoining tent Harry lay staring up at the white canvas roof, over which the moon caused the shadows of the trees to flicker, listening to the lapping of the water and the sighing of the wind in the branches, which sounded so much like the falling of water that she would have thought it was raining, had not the white moonbeams convinced her of the contrary.

How could the other girls be so quiet? she wondered. They lay so still she did not like to disturb them; but it was so hot she could not keep still, so at last she rolled over on the other side.

"Are you awake, Harry?" whispered Nan.

"Awake? I should think so," groaned Harry,



half sitting up. "I never sleep the first night in a strange place."

"Neither can I," said Nan, sitting up in her turn. "The moonlight makes me owly. Let us go out-doors."

"You must not think of such a thing, girls!" ordered Bertha.

"Thought you were asleep," said Harry in surprise.

"Did you expect me to sleep on this expedition?" asked Bertha in a resigned tone. "I didn't expect to."

"Let us make believe it is morning, and get up," said Harry, thrashing round among the quilts.

"Hush!" ordered Bertha. "You will wake Ella."

"No danger of that," replied a muffled voice. "I have been counting black sheep going over a wall till I have got up to two thousand."

"I'll put you all to sleep," proposed Harry.

"Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber."

"Let me alone!" cried Nan, as her friend began



to rock her back and forth as though she was in a cradle.

"Do behave, Harry!" ordered her sister.

"I can't behave," moaned Harry. "I am camping out, and have got to act."

"Let us tie her," cried Nan, starting up in her turn.

Another commotion ensued, and a full half-hour passed before quiet reigned in the girls' tent. None of them slept much, and all welcomed the sun as it shone in a zig-zag line across the wall.

The first thing they heard from the adjoining tent was a shout, followed by a voice singing:—

We 'll sink a free-trade Democrat  
To the bottom of the lake.

"Come on, boys! let's put him in, and wash some of the Democracy out of him."

"I won't sink, boys," came in Ned's voice. "I'll float, like the Democratic party, on the crest of the wave."

"You'll come to the surface, I suppose, — trash always does."

"That's how the Republican party came to float



into the White House. Never understood it before."

The voices died away in the distance as the boys went to take a morning dip in the lake.

The girls were soon stirring, and Nan and Harry pulled Bertha onto her feet with little ceremony.

"You have no respect for my years, girls," said she. "I thought I would see how it felt to lie abed late."

"You must make the coffee," said Harry. "We can't let the chief cook stay in bed."

When they went out only John was visible, sitting before the fire he had rekindled; but the others soon made their appearance.

"We made a fire so that you could heat your curler, girls," said Clifford.

"You are very kind," replied Harry, "but who do you suppose brought a curler up into the woods?"

"Bet a cent Sis did," he replied. "She and her curler are never separated."

"Do you suppose she would curl her hair for the benefit of the trees?" Harry demanded.

"We are not trees," retorted Clifford, "and are



as well worth curling your hair for here as down town."

"I never considered you worth curling my hair for," said Miss Harry airily.

"Here 's a quencher!" cried Clifford. "I feel as though I had been nipped with the frost," and he turned his coat collar up around his ears, and put another stick on the fire.

The girls had gone to work getting breakfast, and now Bertha came down to the fire with the coffeepot.

"How shall we cook it?" said she. "I don't know how you manage things in the woods."

"I 'll make a crane before dinner," replied John. "You 'll have to put the coffeepot down here," and he hollowed out a place in the ashes.

"Do you suppose it is all right?" asked Bertha anxiously. "Do you always cook it that way?"

"We don't always boast of a coffeepot," replied John. "We usually cook our coffee in a tin pail hung over a crane. We are camping out in style now."

"I should n't want any less style," Bertha declared. "I will leave you to cook the coffee, for you know more about it than I do," and she went back to the tent.



Breakfast was soon ready, and they were just sitting down when Ella called for the coffee.

"I forgot it was left in my care," said John, with a guilty feeling.

Nan went to get it, and presently they heard a scream, and, going down to the fire, they found Nan wringing her hands, and looking in dismay at the coffeepot, which was over on its side in the ashes, while a brown fluid trickled into the fire.

"The handle had melted, and came off in my hand," Nan explained.

"What shall we do without a handle?" asked Bertha in dismay. "The coffee is all running out."

"Catch it up by the nose," cried Joe, poking it out of the fire with a stick.

John valiantly seized it by the nose as directed, and ran with it to the table, whither the others followed, laughing.

"Dear me!" said Bertha, regarding the blackened and ruined utensil, "who would ever know that that was once a respectable member of society?"

"Never mind," said Ella gayly, "your boarders are not particular, Bertha."



"But how shall we pour it out?" she asked.

"Hold the cup, and I 'll tip it up," said John, carefully inclining it at the right angle.

This made the meal all the merrier, and when it was over John made a crane, which so delighted Bertha that they could hardly get her to leave it to join the fishing party.

The fishing ground was farther up stream, and Ned navigated the boat up the narrow channel through the tangle of lily leaves.

"How far does this stream go?" asked Nan.

"Until it reaches its head," John replied.

"Where is its head?"

"You have asked more than I can answer," he replied. "Can you tell, boys?"

"It rises in Rocky Lake," replied Joe; "but you can't go much farther in a boat on account of the rapids. The Indians used to shoot 'em in their canoes. Must have been fun."

"I wish you would n't manage to spatter me with every stroke you take, Cliff," complained his sister.

"He 's running up Salt River pretty fast," said Ned. "That 's where he went in ninety-two."

"You have been there more times than I have,"



retorted Clifford. "You must be quite used to the country up there."

"Mr. Murry," pleaded Ella, "won't you make those little boys stop quarreling over politics."

"I 've done my best," replied John. "They woke me this morning throwing pillows at each other. Their arguments don't hit any harder, so no harm is done."

"Here we are!" announced Joe. Shipping their oars, they began to get hooks and lines ready, and, dropping them into the deep, still water, they were soon excitedly bringing in their fish.

They had a famous dinner, and afterwards the girls took their novels and refused to be disturbed; but after supper, when the moon rose, turning the water of the stream to glittering silver, they were all ready for a row.

"Which way shall we go?" asked skipper Ned, taking his place in the stern.

"Down stream," said Harry. "We went up this morning."

"Down it is. Give way, my boys!" shouted Clifford, giving the boat a push, and jumping aboard.

"I 'm going to row," declared Harry, taking up an oar.



"All right," replied Clifford. "I'll be figure-head, and keep a lookout."

They glided smoothly down stream, the splash of the oars keeping time with the banjo strings which Ella was twanging.

"Sing something appropriate to the time and place," said Bertha.

"Only a pansy blossom," began Clifford in a sentimental tone.

"Do put him overboard, somebody!" ordered Ella, "before he goes any further."

"He needs reviving if he's only a faded flower," said Harry, with a sudden splash of her oar, which sprinkled Clifford well.

"Into each life some rain must fall," said he, shaking himself, "so I won't complain. 'I have a silent sorrow here,'" he went on, until Joe made a spring on him, which caused Bertha to cry out:—

"O boys! be careful. You will upset the boat."

"Boys, behave!" said John in a voice that his scholars were well acquainted with.

"Now that peace is restored," said Ella, "and my bad brother utterly quenched, I will sing something worth listening to."

As she struck the strings, and played a gay ac-



companionment, they joined in, and sang everything they knew, — college glees, negro melodies, old war-songs, and hymns, as they floated down stream, until, at last, they came to the bridge and mill where they had left Mr. White the day before.

“I had no idea we had come so far!” exclaimed Ella, as the open lake lay gleaming under the moonlight on the other side of the road.

“It must be very late,” said Bertha. “What time is it?”

“Never mind,” laughed John; “it will do no good to look at our watches.”

“What shall we do, now that we are here?” asked Harry.

“Row back again, I suppose,” replied John.

“Oh, we must do something first,” she declared.

“Let us land, anyway.”

“And serenade our friends of the mill,” proposed Clifford.

“Oh, what fun!” cried Harry, springing up.

“Let us do it.”

“Sit down, before you fall overboard,” ordered Bertha in alarm.

“‘For you would get very wet,’” hummed Clifford. “Now, who is in favor of the serenade?”



Ned had steered the boat to where they had embarked the day before, and Clifford jumped ashore and steadied it by the bow. Nan, Harry, Ned, and Joe soon followed him; but the others stepped ashore more slowly.

"Don't do anything impudent," said Ella, yielding her banjo at her brother's coaxing.

"All right; come on," cried Clifford, gleefully leading the way.

Nan, Harry, and the other two boys followed, but the rest lingered behind. They went through a field, in order to reach a window where a light was shining.

"Oh, see!" cried Harry, choking down a laugh. "We almost walked into a hornets' nest."

"Courting, as sure as I hail from Boston," said Clifford, stopping short.

"Fellow and his girl saying good night," said Joe with a grin.

"We must n't disturb them," whispered Nan. "Let us go before they see us."

"Let us get into the shadow of the house and sing a song," said Clifford. "They can't see us there."

They started across the field; but before they



reached the shadow the young man leaning over the gate came forward and accosted them.

"What do you want here?" he roughly demanded. "You had better clear out."

"Look here!" said Clifford, who was in advance of the others, "do you know whom you are talking to?"

"I know some swells came up here yesterday," he replied, "and I suppose you are one of 'em."

"What if I am?" asked Clifford coolly. "Have n't we a right here?"

"No, by George, you ain't!" cried the other. "Calling yerself a gentleman, and then prowling round folks' trees after their apples."

"Do you think we are after your apples?" cried Clifford, his hot temper rising at this insult.

"You need n't pretend to be so innocent," sneered the other, "for I saw you sneak up from the boat, and watched you prowl round the house. You are none too good to help yourself off of other people's apple trees, nor to lie about it either."

"Take that for your impudence!" To the rustic's astonishment, a light, swift blow came from the slender young stripling before him, and



to his great surprise he found himself sprawling on the ground.

"You young rascal!" he cried, springing to his feet. "I'll make you pay for this."

Clifford's dark eyes gleamed, and his teeth locked; but as the other made a spring at him, he stepped one side, thus causing his enemy to lose his balance, and sprawl on the ground for the second time.

The shout of laughter from the group of boys and girls looking on did not improve his temper, and, springing to his feet, he turned on Clifford, red with fury.

"Look here," said the boy earnestly, "I don't want to fight. I'm sorry I knocked you down, but we were not going to touch your apples."

This speech astonished the rustic more than the blow had, and he stood staring at Clifford with his mouth wide open.

"Fight him, Cliff," said Ned. "We'll back you up."

"Yes, pitch into him, Cliff," cried Joe excitedly. "We'll help you give it to him."

"Oh, don't, Cliff!" the girls begged. "Do come away, boys."



"I won't fight," said Clifford, looking the astonished rustic squarely in the face, "and I beg your pardon for knocking you down."

With that he turned on his heel and marched off.

"Coward!" jeered the gentleman who had twice sought the repose of mother earth. "You don't dare to stay and fight it out, for fear ye'll get your pretty nose smashed."

Clifford made no reply, only walked the faster; but Harry, who was nearest him, saw that his teeth were locked and his hands clinched.

"Go back and give it to him, Cliff," urged Joe. "I wouldn't take that from any one, even if I was a Christian," he added in an undertone.

"No, no," pleaded Nan. "Don't urge him. I wish we had not gone near the place."

"Better wait till he has a father-in-law, before he mounts guard over his apple trees," growled Joe. "I've a good mind to go back and give him a blow on my own account."

"Don't you think of such a thing!" commanded Nan. "Thank fortune! here are the others."

"What success did you have?" called out the rest of the party gayly. "Did you get treated?"



The others eagerly explained, but Clifford was unusually silent during the row home, and so sober that he did not seem like himself.

When they gathered round the camp fire Clifford took his Bible out of his pocket, and handed it to John, saying, "You had better read to-night; I can't."

John made no comment, but, opening the Bible, read slowly, "'I will lift mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help!'"

They did not linger over the fire, but retired as soon as they had sung their hymn. Clifford did not follow the others, but sat with his chin resting on his hand, looking thoughtfully into the coals.

"Put it out when you leave it," said John cheerfully, "for we don't want to set the woods on fire."

"I'll look out for it," replied Clifford without raising his eyes.

A light step soon roused him, and, looking up, he saw Ella standing beside him with a shawl wrapped about her.

"Don't feel so bad, Clifford," said she, sitting down beside him. "I am sure it was a very natural thing to do."



"I lost my temper, Ella," he replied. "Am I never going to be able to control myself?"

"Patience, Cliff," said his sister cheerfully. "We can only gain the victory over ourselves by long watching and prayer."

"But I forget to watch," he replied despondently. "It's all over in a minute, before I have time to think."

"Remember what I have often told you, Cliff," said Ella earnestly. "The grace that made John a saint would hardly keep Peter from knocking a man down. You will have to fight and pray as he did. The Christ understands, and is ready to help you try again."

"He must be tired of forgiving me," said Clifford with a sigh.

"O Cliff!" cried Ella, springing up, "don't be discouraged. Remember you have not been trying very long, and you have made some advance; for last year you would have pounded him to a jelly, and come from the conflict with a smashed nose and black eye."

"I had to run away to keep from fighting to-night. Oh, what a coward I am!" said Clifford with a groan.



“Why, Cliff, it is brave to run away sometimes,” said Ella. “But don’t brood over this any longer. God has forgiven you, and will help you try again. So go to bed, like a sensible boy.”

She left him with a comforting pat on the shoulder, and in a few minutes Clifford rose, and, stamping out the fire, went into the tent.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE PARTY.

THE next day the three boys rowed down to the mill after some fresh milk, leaving the others at the camp. As they came in sight of the rest of the party on their return, Joe sang out gayly:—

“Hurrah! We have got a jolly plan. Prepare to be astonished.”

“Full dress ball,” cried Clifford, recklessly waving the kettle of milk. “You girls will have to send down home for something to rig up in.”

“Be careful!” cried Bertha. “You will spill that milk.”

“I say,” bawled Clifford, “it ’s a good thing you brought your curler, Sis; could n’t go if you had n’t.”

“Go where?” demanded Harry.

“Don’t you little girls wish you knew?” said tormenting Joe.



"As if we cared," said Harry scornfully. "It's only some of your nonsense."

"Kid glove reception at nine o'clock," called out Clifford; "grand promenade at half-past; ice cream and sherbet at ten."

"And we won't go home till morning," sang Joe in a melodious voice, pitched in a very high key.

"Now, do tell us all about it," said Ella when the boys were on shore and Bertha had rescued the milk.

"You won't be able to go," replied her brother, "because you have n't anything to wear."

"Go where?" she demanded.

"To the party," Clifford replied. "But you can't go, for we can't go down home and get your toggery."

"What are you talking about?" said Ella. "Has some one been treating you to sweet cider, and fuddled your brains?"

"Our brains are perfectly clear, madam," replied Clifford with dignity. "We have been invited to a party."

"Where?" asked Harry curiously.

"At the residence of one Mr. Albee, who lives a few miles above the mills."



"I don't believe any one asked you," Harry declared. "You invited yourselves."

"We did n't, as it makes out," Joe retorted. "The fellow at the mill told us to come and bring our girls."

"How are we to get there?" asked Harry.

"He promised to have a haycart ready for us at the bridge."

"Oh, what fun!" cried both Nan and Harry in delight.

"But," said Ella, "has the gentleman at the mill a right to invite guests to another man's house?"

"What is the need of being so particular in the woods?" exclaimed Clifford. "The fellow said they would like to have us."

"Of course they will," said Harry. "It is n't like a real party, you know."

"Ella can't realize that she is hundreds of miles from the Hub," said Clifford, "and that she has n't got to account to Back Bay for what she does."

"Have you said anything to Mr. Murry about it?" asked his sister.

Clifford directed a saucy wink towards John, and said gravely, —



"Ask your dominie to grant you an indulgence, girls, and forgive you beforehand for any scrape you may get into."

"Please, Mr. Murry, may I speak?" asked Harry, holding up her hand.

"Certainly," he replied. "What is it?"

"Can we go to the party in a hayrick, if we promise to be good?"

"I am willing, if you will let me go too," he replied.

"Hurrah!" cried Joe, throwing up his straw hat.

"Bertha, do you approve of this wild-goose plan?" asked Ella, turning to her cousin.

"Now, don't you say a word!" cried Harry, as Bertha opened her lips.

"What do you think of it, Ella?" asked Bertha, without heeding Harry's command.

"Now, you sha'n't say a word against it," and, going behind her cousin, Harry clasped both hands over her mouth, until the victim made imploring gestures of submission.

In spite of their disapproval the two older girls were coaxed into making two of the party, and directly after supper they started off in the boat.



"If I had known we were going to be invited to a party," remarked Harry, "I would have brought my best gown."

"Never mind," said Clifford soothingly, "your hair will be curled."

"Little did I think," exclaimed Ella, "when I left my native land, that I would be guilty of going to a strange man's house without an invitation!"

"Shows how the natives have corrupted us," said Clifford gravely.

"I like that!" cried Joe, "when he hinted to the fellow that we would like to go."

"Is it possible?" said Ella. "Never mention that in Boston, if you value our reputation."

"I say, Cliff," said Ned, "perhaps you'll meet the fellow you knocked down."

Clifford flushed beneath the rich Spanish brown of his sunburn, for he was sensitive on that subject, and the boys were a little shy about chaffing him on his trouble with the young rustic.

"They will bury the hatchet, if they do meet," said John, "and Clifford can tell him what he was there for."

"A fellow does n't like to make a fool of him-



self before his girl," remarked Joe, "and that was what made him so mad."

"She will be there to-night, too," said Harry. "Won't it be fun?"

When they reached the bridge they found the hayrick all ready for them, half filled with new hay, in which the girls nestled with exclamations of delight.

Joe took the reins, and they rattled off in grand style, tooting on the horn which Nan and Harry had insisted upon bringing. Dark figures were seen running to the doors of the farmhouses which they passed, and once a man in his shirt sleeves, bearing a lamp in his hand, called out to them in an angry tone, but they did not stop to hear what he said.

When they reached their destination their spirits somewhat subsided, and they were comparatively quiet as they drew rein in the dooryard of a brightly lighted farmhouse. Joe threw down the reins, and jumped out, but the others seemed bashful about following.

"Why don't you get out?" he demanded.

"We are waiting for you to announce our arrival," replied Nan.



"I 'm not going ahead," he declared. "I ain't invited."

"Neither am I," said Clifford solemnly, "and I feel delicate about going in without an invitation."

"I did n't know there was anything delicate about you," retorted Joe. "You were bold enough this morning."

"I am bold enough now," he declared. "I 'm only waiting for you to go ahead."

"I am glad to learn that my brother has some modesty," said Ella. "I think the best thing we can do is to gracefully retire."

"I think so too," said Bertha decidedly. "Get in, Joe, and turn round."

"Oh, don't!" cried Harry. "How foolish to go back now that we are here!"

"They don't know that we are here," said Nan. "Blow the horn, Harry."

"No, no, don't!" cried Bertha, leaning forward to seize her sister's arm; but it was too late: Harry had the horn to her lips, and blew a blast before Bertha could prevent her.

"Now you have done it," said she in dismay. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Harry."

The house door opened, and a crowd gath-



ered round it. In the foreground was an old man well known to the young people of the village.

"How are you, Mr. Albee?" cried Joe. "I have brought you a load of live stock."

"How are ye, young folks?" replied the old man, advancing to the hayrick. "We've been expecting ye all the evening. Come in; come in."

"We feel rather bashful, Mr. Albee," said John, "and were just thinking about going away."

"That you, schoolmaster?" asked the farmer. "You've got a big crowd here. How many of ye are there?"

"We are all here, Mr. Albee," said Harry saucily, "eight of us. Ain't you glad there are no more?"

"And one good Democrat, Major," piped Ned. "I'm the man for you there."

"So ye are, sonny, so ye are!" cried the delighted Mr. Albee. "Give us yer hand on it. Now, boys and girls, pile out."

They obeyed this cordial invitation eagerly, all except Bertha. She could not make it seem right, nor feel at her ease. She had often seen Mr. Albee in the stores and about the village, but never spoke to him, and now they were going to



his house as though they were old friends. To be sure, invitations were not given out especially to any: it was a gathering of all the country around, such as they had two or three times a year; but Bertha could not forget the fact that she would never think of asking any of the Albee family to her house, neither would they dare to come thus uninvited.

She did not dream that the old farmer considered it an honor to have the camping-out party beneath his roof, and that he felt quite overawed by the presence of the schoolmaster, of whose learning he had a very high opinion; nor that his youngest daughter, a rosy-cheeked, black-eyed girl, was immensely flattered at having the "towns-folks" come to their party.

The girls hung back bashfully as the newcomers entered the room; for they regarded Joe and Ned as superior beings, from the fact of their being "town boys;" and John, the school-teacher, they looked upon with awe. Clifford, however, surpassed and eclipsed all the others, with his graceful, easy manner, and his dark, handsome face, made all the more attractive by the coat of tan he had received during his sojourn in the



woods. He was like a fairy prince to those girls, and though none of them ever saw him again, he was not forgotten.

The young people made themselves at home; but Bertha could not enter into the rough, noisy games, and looked on in astonishment at blind-man's buff, in which Ella joined, running as fleetly as any of them from the blind man.

"Why don't you play, Bertha?" she asked her cousin.

"What would Miss Moore say, Ella?" Bertha replied, laughing.

"She would be dreadfully shocked, of course," Ella replied, "but it is n't as bad as the German, and I used to dance that."

"Is n't it dreadful?" whispered Clifford over her shoulder. "What a letter I shall have to write home! You will see the Rev. Mr. Thorn coming down here to look after his stray sheep."

"Hush!" said Ella, frowning at her brother.

"Who is the Rev. Mr. Thorn?" asked Bertha curiously.

"The guardian of the flock," replied Clifford gravely, "of which Ella is the particular pet lamb.



Only think how it would shock the old fellow to see her to-night !”

“It would not,” declared Ella. “He would join in and play blindman’s buff as heartily as any one.”

“Forgetting his gout and his rheumatism !” exclaimed Clifford. “Would n’t it be a sight for gods and men to see him chasing that stout damsel with the frizzes round the room ?”

Bertha did not understand the meaning of the laughing glance exchanged between the brother and sister, but thought no more about it, as something else claimed her attention.

A bountiful supper was provided, but Bertha was horrified to see the young men and women throw pieces of cake at each other, and snatch food from their neighbors’ plates.

“Don’t look so shocked, Bertha,” said John, laughing at her. “Remember when we are in Turkey we must do as turkeys do.”

“Are you thinking of snatching Ella’s plate, and throwing your piece of cake at Harry ?” she asked ironically.

“Oh, no,” he replied, “but I can look on serenely while other people do it.”



Among the rosy-cheeked girls and awkward young men were Clifford's enemy and his sweetheart, the mill man's daughter. The former, no doubt, cherished spite in his heart, but he did not care to say anything, for he had a misgiving that the encounter did not reflect credit on himself. The story leaked out, and the sly fun at his expense increased the countryman's wrath. Clifford's popularity with the girls caused his jealousy to burn; for Ella had been at great pains to explain her brother's object to the young lady, and she was so angry with her lover for insulting the handsome young gentleman when he was about to pay her a delicate attention, that she snubbed him all the evening, and devoted herself to the strangers.

After supper they played games of forfeits. John and the two older girls drew off one side, but the others joined in with great glee. The game was "Roll the Cover," but the strangers were so quick that none of them got caught, until one young lady, calling Clifford's number, gave the cover such a slight twirl that it was flat on the floor before he reached it, in spite of the spring which he made to catch it.



They all clapped their hands as he stood in the middle of the floor, feeling that he was in for it, and wondering if he would be sent on a mission, and have to kiss all those red-cheeked girls. He would never hear the last of it, he thought, glancing out the corner of his eye at Ned and Joe, who were bursting with fun over his situation.

But he was spared that ordeal, and only told to kiss the prettiest girl in the room,—an order which caused many hearts to flutter, and the millman's daughter to toss her head with a conscious air, sure he would select her after he had planned to sing under her window only the night before. But Clifford gave one hasty glance round the room, then marching up to where Ella was sitting, bent over and gave her a hearty kiss. There was a row of blank faces in the circle of players. Joe's head disappeared behind his neighbor's chair; Harry choked down a laugh, and John softly applauded with his hands. As for Ella, she was both amused and pleased with what her brother had done. She considered kissing games vulgar, and was glad he had got out of it so well. But it caused a decline in Clifford's popularity. The girls could not think as highly of a young gentleman who



preferred to kiss his own sister instead of some one else. But Clifford never knew it, so no harm was done.

The party broke up at a late hour, and the hayrick rattled off with a gay load, singing to a well-known air: —

We 'll all go home in a hayrick  
The morning after the ball.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN ADVENTURE IN THE WOODS.

THE next day was unpleasant. It did not storm, but the sky was cold and gray, and a damp, chill wind blew from the east. The girls spent the morning over the fire, but the boys took hooks and lines, and, going up stream, returned at noon with their usual supply of fish for dinner.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Harry, "I am tired of doing nothing. Let us take a walk, Nan."

"It is going to rain," said Nan, looking up at the clouds, "and I forgot to bring my umbrella."

"Nonsense!" declared Harry. "If it does n't rain before noon it will keep off until night; won't it, Mr. Murry?"

"I'm no weather prophet," replied John, "but the old men say that when the wind is south-east and it begins to drop, it's a pretty good sign of rain."



"The wind comes from that direction," said Harry, holding up her handkerchief. "Is that east, Mr. Murry?"

"I suppose so," he replied. "The sun rose over there this morning."

"Then the wind is n't south-east," said Harry, "and it has n't begun to drop yet, so come, Nan, let us take our walk."

"I would rather finish this story, Harry," pleaded Nan.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Harry, "Nan won't be any good to any one until she gets through that book."

Nan laughed as she turned a page, but Clifford called out cheerfully:—

"Come on, Harry; I'll go with you if you want me to."

"I'm glad some one has a little life in him," said Harry. "Let us start in a new direction and see what we can find."

"Wait till I get my gun," called Clifford, going into the tent. "It is n't safe to go about a strange country unarmed."

"Don't get lost," called out Ella as they left the camp.



“No danger,” replied Clifford over his shoulder. “Bad pennies always return.”

They could not feel the chill wind in the woods, and found it quite pleasant as they wandered on, laughing and chatting, stopping every once in a while to pick the ripe blueberries with which the bushes were laden. By and by they came to some high pasture land, where they could see the country for miles around. In a basin, shut in by wooded hills, was the lake, a steel gray, covered with white caps; and the stream could be traced, like a silver thread, as far as the eye could reach. On the other side stretched an unbroken forest, until, far away to the north, they caught the gleam of another lake.

“What a forest!” exclaimed Clifford. “It brings Cooper’s yarns right home, does n’t it? Indians used to live here once, did n’t they?”

“Yes,” Harry replied; “and then it was forest everywhere. But they have been cutting away ever since the white man came, and some day, I suppose, it will be cleared land from the first to the second lake.”

“It’s a shame to cut down these grand old trees,” declared Clifford.



"It seems so," replied Harry, "but people must live, and lumbering is the only business round here."

"Well, we'll enjoy the woods while we can," said Clifford. "Let us explore that forest down there."

They left the high land, and went down into the woods, which were carpeted with soft green moss and trailing vines. Birds twittered in the branches overhead, and once a squirrel ran down the trunk of a tree, and looked at them saucily out of his bright eyes. Clifford raised his gun and took aim, but Harry caught his arm, begging him not to shoot, and he lowered it, not averse to sparing the little creature's life.

In a lovely green nook they came upon a rude camp with a blackened spot before the door. An old kettle and some tin cans proved that somebody had camped there at one time.

They had no idea how far they had wandered, until, taking out his watch, Clifford uttered an exclamation of surprise at finding how late it was, and turning they hastily retraced their steps.

But it is not so easy to keep the track in the thick woods, and though Clifford had noticed



plenty of landmarks as he went along, he found it was not so easy to go from the decayed stump to the tree struck by lightning when they tried to retrace their footsteps; for they had not made a straight course, but had zig-zagged about among the trees. Clifford at last gave up trying to follow their former course, and setting his face in the direction in which he thought the camp lay he pushed ahead, Harry following close behind.

Neither spoke of any doubts or fears, but both felt a secret misgiving as they kept on and no opening appeared. Worst of all it began to rain; big drops pattered on the leaves, and splashed down upon them.

"It is going to rain, I suppose, for it has begun to drop," said Harry, but her laugh did not sound quite natural.

"Hurrah!" shouted Clifford. "Here is a clearing at last."

They pushed eagerly ahead, but stopped short in surprise, for the spot was one neither of them had ever come across in any of their tramps.

It was a clearing in the midst of the forest, in which stood a rude log house, with a stovepipe for a chimney. In front of the house was a chop-



ping block, and the fresh chips lying about it proved that some one had been there recently. Clifford and Harry looked about them in silent astonishment, then turned to each other.

"Some one lives here," said Harry in a low tone, as though she was afraid the owner of the property might be lurking behind the trees.

"Looks like it," replied Clifford. "Queer place for a summer cottage, though."

"I have read," said Harry, drawing nearer to her cousin, "of madmen living in the woods this way."

"An insane man never built that cabin," said Clifford with cheerful assurance. "Some fellow has got a camp here. He is n't at home, though, so we can't pay him a call."

"I think," said Harry decidedly, "that we had better go home as quickly as possible."

"So do I," replied Clifford; "but I have got a little turned round, blundering about in the woods, so, if you will stay here, I'll climb one of those tall trees and take a look."

"O Cliff!" cried Harry. "Don't leave me alone; let me go too."

"I won't go far," Clifford replied; "or be gone



a minute. There is nothing to be afraid of, Harry."

Harry was ashamed to say that she was afraid, for she had always been proud of her courage, and Clifford himself had often called her a brave girl; so she sat down on the chopping block, and said bravely, —

"All right, I 'll stay; but don't be gone long."

"I 'll be back in five minutes and a half," said Clifford, speaking gayly to conceal his anxiety. "I 'll leave my gun, and if the owner of this property comes and accuses you of trespassing you will have it to defend yourself with."

He went off with a laughing good-by; but when he was alone his face grew grave, for he knew that they were lost, and that to find one's way through the forest was no easy task. His only hope was that from the top of one of the tallest trees he could see the stream, and then tell in which direction the camp lay.

"If I only had a compass," he groaned, as he stumbled over the underbrush.

There was nothing to do but make the best of it, however, so selecting one of the tallest trees he proceeded to work his way to the top.



Harry, in the meanwhile, sat on the chopping block in a most dejected attitude, the rain dripping down upon her from the leaves overhead. She was afraid they were lost, but that thought was nothing to the nervous fear which the strange spot in the heart of the forest gave her. Her active imagination peopled it with all sorts of dreadful persons.

Now she imagined a madman had shut himself up there, and was peeping out at her from some crack or crevice, and, again, it was the hiding place of some robber or murderer, who might return at any moment and find her there. She started at a dozen imaginary sounds. The rustle of a bird was the approach of a madman; the wind among the trees was the return of the band who were hiding from justice in that clearing which they had been so unfortunate as to stumble upon; and she covered her eyes with a shudder, as she imagined figures starting out from behind the trees. She hated herself for her cowardliness, but could not help it. If there was some real danger, she thought, it would nerve her to be brave, but these nervous fears mastered her.

What was that? A footstep, surely. No mis-



take this time: she could hear the twigs snap as some one slowly and cautiously advanced from the rear of the house.

She started up, her heart beating wildly, and seized the gun. Clifford had told her to use it, she thought, as she placed a trembling hand on the trigger. A report rang through the woods, followed by a wild scream, as a man's figure just emerging from behind the trees fell forward into a clump of bushes.

The gun dropped from Harry's nerveless hands, and she felt as though she were growing mad as she ran forward to the prostrate form. Before she reached the bushes Clifford picked himself up, looking rather pale.

"Oh!" screamed Harry, "I thought I had killed you," and she dropped in a heap on the wet ground, too weak to stand up.

"Why did you fire that gun, Harry?" asked Clifford sternly. "If I had n't stumbled over those bushes you would have hit me."

"O Clifford," she sobbed, "scold me; punish me: I might have killed you. Are you hurt? Did I hit you? What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"



"It did not hit me at all," replied Clifford. "Don't cry so, Harry; I'm all right. But why did you fire the gun?"

"I did n't know it was you," said Harry brokenly. "I did n't mean to fire at all, but my hand shook so that my finger slipped. O Cliff, if I had killed you I should have gone mad!"

"Well, you did n't." His voice shook a little, but he added in a steadier tone, —

"You must n't lie there in the wet; get up."

But Harry could only sob, for the shock had completely upset her.

"Come, you must get up," said Clifford, taking her by the arm; "the ground is wet, and so is your dress."

She obeyed him passively, but her limbs felt strangely weak when she tried to walk.

"I am afraid we are lost," said Clifford, hoping to make her forget what had happened by telling her of their situation. "There must be some high land between us and the lake, for I can't see anything but woods. Now, the question is, what had we better do?"

"Do whatever you think best, Cliff," replied Harry. "I can't think of anything but what might have happened."



“Come, Harry,” said Clifford cheerfully, “be a brave girl, and think no more about that. It was an accident which no one could help. Now, what had we better do?”

“Let us not stay here,” said Harry, looking about with a shiver.

“I have been thinking,” said Clifford slowly, “that we had better stay in one place, for if we move around we may wander farther away, and make it harder for them to find us. Then it is raining hard. You are wet and hungry, so I think we had better make ourselves at home in this establishment.”

“O Cliff,” said Harry, “we don’t know whom it belongs to.”

“Whoever the landlord is he won’t begrudge us the shelter of his domicile,” Clifford declared. “There is a stove there, and you must get dry, or you will catch your ‘death of cold,’ as Kezia says.”

Harry felt that she must obey Clifford, and, screwing up her courage, prepared to follow him; but as they approached the house the sight of a dark figure coming from the woods caused her to seize Clifford’s arm with a slight scream.



"See there!" she whispered, trembling. "Whom do you suppose it is?"

"The owner of the house," said Clifford reassuringly. "Don't be afraid; he won't hurt you."

The figure which had startled Harry was that of an old man with rough gray hair hanging down from under an old cap. He advanced to the edge of the clearing, and stood staring at the strangers with his hands in his pockets.

"How do you do?" said Clifford, nodding politely.

"How d' ye do?" he returned. "May I ax who ye are?"

"My name is Clifford Preston," said the boy frankly. "There is a party of us camping out by Bailey's stream. My cousin and I started out on a tramp and have got lost."

"So ye are one of them fellers, are ye?" said the old man, gazing meditatively at the pair.

"What fellows?" Clifford inquired.

"Them fellers camping out over yonder," jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

"Did you know we were camping out?" asked Clifford.

"Ain't much goes on in these woods that I



don't know. So you got lost, did yer?" and a grim smile twisted his features.

"How far is it to our camp?" asked Clifford.

"Nigh on two miles."

"Would you guide us there for half a dollar?"

"Going to make a bargain, are ye, young sir?" said the old fellow, drawing down the lid of his right eye.

"I 'll pay you for showing us the way," Clifford replied.

"Wal, I 'll have to have a bite of something first." And he moved towards the log house.

"We are pretty hungry," said Clifford, "and would n't object to something to eat."

"Ye 'll pay for that too, I s'pose," said the old man shrewdly.

"Yes, sir," said Clifford promptly.

"Wal, then, we 'll see about supper," and he opened the rude door of the little camp.

"Do you live here?" asked Clifford, watching him.

"This is one of my residences," he replied. "I live round in spots."

"What is your name?"

"Trapper Ben they call me. Now you can walk in and make yerselves at hum."



It was a bare little hut which they entered, destitute of furniture, except for a rusty stove and a few old chairs.

Harry, whose fears had subsided, examined her surroundings with something of her usual spirits as she sat before the stove drying her wet skirts, while their host prepared the supper, which consisted of hasty pudding served in tin mugs and one plate, with which he honored Harry. Very black tea, without either milk or sugar, completed the meal ; but the guests were hungry and not very particular.

Harry began to enjoy their adventure, but when they started out in the wet and damp to tramp through the woods she found she was very tired. Her head and feet ached, and it seemed as though she could not drag her weary limbs over the ground. She uttered no complaint, however, but trudged bravely on behind the others.

The camp was reached at last ; but only the girls were there, for John and the two boys had started off in search of the lost ones. Clifford fired the gun, the signal agreed upon should the wanderers return in their absence, and the reports soon brought them back.



The adventure caused quite an excitement, but Harry was too tired to talk about it, and went at once to bed, but not until she had whispered to Clifford:—

“You won’t tell them about *that*, will you, Cliff?”

“Never,” he replied, and he kept his word.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## ALMOST PERSUADED.

IT rained all night, and everything was wet and damp the next morning, but the boys soon had the camp fire burning, and after a while the sun came out.

Harry was so sore and stiff after her tramp and wetting that they would not let her do anything, but ordered her to play the invalid.

"Harry is the heroine of the only adventure we have had," said Ella, as they were eating breakfast. "I should like to see that old man's hut. Who is he, Mr. Murry? You said last night you knew him."

"I have heard of him ever since I was a boy," replied John, "but he is n't as notorious as he used to be."

"Is he the old man who is always being taken up for stealing?" asked Bertha.



"The very one," replied John. "He has boarded a good deal in the county jail. He has been comparatively honest since he took to trapping and living in the woods. Perhaps his last conversion did him some good."

"His last conversion?" repeated Ella. "How many has he had?"

"I would n't undertake to say how many times he has been converted," replied John. "Every once in a while he comes forward, and is a bright and shining light for a time. When I was a boy we used to go to meeting outside of the village on purpose to hear him talk. His favorite expression was, 'The Lord has put a new song in my mouth.' The next week he was taken up for stealing a boat."

"What was the song that was put in his mouth, then?" asked Joe.

"'Steal Away,' perhaps," suggested Clifford.

"I would like to see his hut all the more," said Ella, "since learning what a noted character he is."

"I would n't undertake to guide you there," said Clifford, "for my bump of locality is n't to be depended upon."



"I'm sure I never want to see the place again," said Harry with a shudder, as she thought of what might have happened there.

Friday was their last day, for on Saturday they were to break camp. At noon they had the most famous chowder of all.

While the boys with aprons tied under their chins were helping the girls clear away, Harry withdrew from the merry crowd, and, seating herself by the stream, looked thoughtfully at the rippling water. She had not seemed like herself since their adventure, but had been so quiet and still that they all noticed it. She had not sat there long when Clifford, with a calico apron round his neck, came crashing through the bushes with a pail in his hand.

"Why, Harry!" he exclaimed in surprise, "you here? What are you thinking about all alone by yourself?"

"Yesterday," she replied. "I can't get it out of my mind."

"I'd forget all about it," said Clifford, drawing his dripping pail from the water, "for it is n't a very pleasant subject to remember."

"But I can't keep it out of my mind," replied



Harry. "What should I have done if I had killed you, Cliff?"

"Now, Harry," said Clifford, sitting down beside her, "you must not think of that. It will do no good, and only give you the glooms."

"Did God cause you to stumble, Clifford?" she asked with a shyness quite foreign to her.

"Of course he did," said the boy confidently.

"To save you?" she asked softly.

"To save us both," said Clifford earnestly; "for it would have been worse for you than for me."

"Aren't you afraid to die, Cliff?"

"I have never thought much about it," he replied. "It has always seemed so far off. I am sure I would not be afraid to go to my Saviour whenever he calls me, but I love this life, and want to stay as long as he is willing. I thank him for saving me yesterday, for I don't want to die that way."

"I can't thank him," moaned Harry, "for he is n't my Saviour."

"He is your Saviour, Harry," said Clifford. "You know he wants you to come to him."

"But I don't know how to be a Christian, Cliff," said Harry, like a little child.



"Do you want to be one, Harry?" he asked.

"I would give anything to be like you and Nan," said she with a sigh, "but I don't know how."

Clifford was silent for a moment while he breathed an inward prayer that he might be able to help his cousin. He was a young Christian, and this was the first time he had been called upon to help a soul directly.

"It's just the simplest thing in the world, Harry," said he, after a pause. "If you wanted something of your father very much, what would you do?"

"Ask him for it, of course," she replied.

"Well, that is all you have to do to be a Christian, — just ask Christ to be your Saviour."

"But I shall have to come forward in meeting," said Harry, "and tell about my experience."

"Just join as an active member," said Clifford. "You won't be afraid after you have once taken a stand."

"But it is so hard, Cliff," sighed Harry.

"I know it," the boy replied. "I was an awful coward. You know what a temper I have, Harry: I thought I could n't join as an active member when I got mad every week. But at last



Ella convinced me that I could not rid myself of my temper, no matter how hard I tried ; that only Christ could take it away ; and if I waited till I got rid of it before I accepted Christ, I would never become a Christian ; so I came to him just as I was, and he has helped me ever since."

"But, Cliff," said Harry slowly, "how did you go to him?"

"I prayed," said Clifford softly, while the color mantled his sunburnt cheek, for he could not speak of his inmost feelings easily.

"I wish you would pray for me," pleaded Harry. "I don't know how."

"Alan Thorn says it is just talking to God; when I think of it that way it brings him nearer."

"But God is n't to me what he is to you and Ella," said poor Harry. "He is so far off I can't find him. Do pray for me, Cliff, I am so miserable and unhappy."

"Let us pray now," said he earnestly. "God hears everywhere."

Harry consented ; and, kneeling on the mossy turf, with her hand in his, the simple young Christian prayed :—

"Dear Father, Harry wants thee very much.



She needs thee to help her, but she does not know how to find thee. Wilt thou not show her the way, and teach her by thy Holy Spirit what it is to be a Christian. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen."

Though Harry rather prided herself on the fact that she did not cry on all occasions, as some girls did, her cousin's short, earnest prayer moved her to tears, and she sobbed as heartily as ever Emma Baker had done.

"I don't know what I am crying for," she sobbed, "but I can't help it, so please leave me alone to think it over."

Clifford obeyed, and, taking up the pail, went back to where the others were.

"Hope you've been gone long enough after that water!" said Joe. "Did n't know but you had got lost again."

"Where is Harry, Cliff?" asked Nan.

"Sulking," Joe informed her. "She has been down in the dumps ever since she went off yesterday and brought up at Trapper Ben's."

"I'll go and find her," and Nan slipped away in search of her friend.

"It is our last evening," said John, poking the



fire with the stick he held, as they all sat around it after tea.

"Don't mention it!" said Harry. "Let us forget that we are going home to-morrow."

"I wonder where we shall all be next year at this time," said Ella, thoughtfully gazing into the coals.

"I shall be just where I am now," said Bertha with a slight sigh.

"On that very same log?" asked Clifford.

"No," she replied; "but at home, doing the same thing day after day."

"Perhaps not," said Ella cheerfully. "You don't know what delightful thing may come to you next year."

"I have given up expecting," replied Bertha. "Nothing delightful ever does happen. Every new year of my life is just like those that have gone before."

"You have had something new this year," said Clifford. "Last August you did n't know me. You ought to be very thankful for my friendship."

"I am, Cliff," said Bertha, looking down affectionately at the handsome boy at her feet. "I am



so glad that I decided to take boarders this summer. I wish you would both promise to come next year."

"And camp out at Bailey's stream," added John.

"All right; it is a bargain," cried Clifford, and he began to carve the date on a piece of board with his jackknife.

"We will all sign it," said John. "Your name must be first, Miss Preston."

"I'm afraid I can't," said she, while her brown eyes sparkled in the firelight. "I shall be needed somewhere else next year."

"We have had too good a time for it ever to be repeated," said Bertha with some bitterness.

"You must come and see me next year," said Ella.

"That will be impossible," said Bertha, shaking her head. "I shall never be able to leave home."

"Let us have some music," said John cheerfully, handing Ella her banjo.

She fingered the strings thoughtfully for a moment, and then began the sweet air of the old army song:—

We're tenting to-night;  
Tenting to-night;  
Tenting on the old camp-ground.



The party was not as merry as usual, for the thought that they were to break camp on the morrow, and that the jolly comradeship might never be renewed, made them rather sober; but for all that it was a gay company that rowed down stream the next morning, shouting:—

“Good-by, old Bailey! good-by!”

It was late in the afternoon when they rattled up the lane, and Kezia ran to the door with her hands all flour, for she was making biscuits for tea.

“How nice and clean you look, Kezia!” said Bertha as she entered the kitchen. “I am stiff with dirt.”

The girls went upstairs at once to take a bath, and came down to supper in fresh, light dresses.

“I feel like a new creature,” said Ella. “How much good it does one to camp out! I wish you would try it, auntie.”

“My dear Ella!” exclaimed Miss Moore, “how can you be so absurd as to think of my going into the woods, and living in a tent?”

“It would do you good,” Ella declared.

“Yes, auntie,” chimed in Clifford, “we would swing your hammock up in a tree where the snakes and spiders could n’t get at you.”



"My dear Clifford!" implored his aunt, "do not mention such things; you take away my appetite."

"The spiders are nothing to the ants," declared the boy. "You just ought to see them!"

"My dear Clifford," said Miss Moore, leaning back in despair, "if you have any mercy you will desist, and not describe your life in the woods farther."

"But you know I'm uncommonly fond of aunts," said the boy, "especially when they tip."

"Your mother spoils you by allowing you so much pocket money," declared Miss Moore, at which there was a general smile, for they all knew that the lady nearly doubled her nephew's allowance.

Clifford looked forward to Monday evening, hoping Harry would give some manifestation of her feelings.

The Endeavor meeting was well attended, and unusually impressive, but what Clifford was praying for did not come. Harry sat silent, and no one but her cousin knew how seriously she was thinking, until just before the meeting closed, when she said in a trembling voice, —

"Please sing 'Almost Persuaded.'"



Clifford's dark eyes sparkled, and he sang with all his heart. At the lines —

Prayers rise from hearts so dear,

their eyes met, and Harry felt tears in her own. She was afraid she was getting to be as bad as Emma Baker about crying.

No one said anything to her on the subject after meeting, for they knew that a soul ought not to be handled roughly ; but there were many prayers that night that Harry White might be fully persuaded to become a Christian.



## CHAPTER XV.

## BERTHA TRANSFORMED.

THE next week a wealthy invalid lady who could not go out opened her large, handsome house, and invited the Christian Endeavor Society there to a social, and all those who could play, sing, or give recitations were asked to take part. Harry and Bertha were left out, for the White girls had no accomplishments, and could not shine in society. Bertha did not mind this, for she had outgrown the days when she had longed to sing like a bird, and wept because she could not play the piano like other girls, and now she laughingly declared that she had rather be useful than ornamental.

But not so Harry. When the social was first planned she began to cultivate a little weed of envy, until it grew to quite a plant. Strangest of all, this jealousy was caused by Nan, her best



and dearest friend, and it was all because she had a piano.

Now, the piano was nothing new; Nan had had it ever since she was a little girl, and it had never troubled Harry until they began to get ready for the social.

Nan had a prominent place on the program. She was to play a duet with Clifford, so he was obliged to go down to her house to practice it every evening. Besides the duet, Nan began to accompany him in his cornet solos, and they had very pleasant times together.

Of course Harry always went with Clifford, but it was not much fun to sit in the corner and look on and listen, and she often wished that cornets and pianos had never been invented. Harry was not used to being in the background, and at last vowed that she would not go to Nan's to another rehearsal; so the next evening when Clifford came down, cornet in hand, Harry sat by the table reading.

"Hurry up, Harry," said he, "or we shall be late; Ella is going down to try my solo with me. We have n't played together for so long, I expect that we are pretty rusty."



"I wish we had an instrument," said Bertha, "so that you could practice at home. What are you going to play to-morrow night?"

"There was a small boy had a toot,  
And the neighbors all threatened to shoot ;  
But the toot the next day  
Was filled full of clay,  
And spoiled all the toot of the toot !"

chanted Clifford.

"Be about so, if we had neighbors within a quarter of a mile," growled Joe, who disliked the cornet as much as Harry did.

Clifford's reply was the bugle call at the foot of the stairs for his sister. She soon made her appearance dressed for the street.

"Come, Harry," said Clifford for the second time.

"I 'm not going," said Harry coolly.

"Why not?"

"I don't feel like it."

"But this is our last rehearsal," said Clifford in surprise.

"You don't need me," said Harry sharply. "I don't know anything about music."



"What ails you, Harry?" asked Clifford in astonishment.

"Nothing," said Harry shortly. "Only I don't want to go down to Nan's."

"Glad of it," declared Joe. "We can have a sensible game of checkers."

"You need n't go if you don't want to," said Clifford with dignity. "Come on, Sis."

After they were gone Joe coaxed Harry to play checkers with him; but she took so little interest in the game that at last he closed the board in disgust, saying it was too easy to beat her, and Harry went up to her own room, where she indulged in a good girlish cry.

The next afternoon Ella tapped at her cousin's door.

"Come in," said Bertha; "I am too lazy to change my dress."

"You are tired out," replied Ella, "and will be glad when your boarders are gone."

"No, indeed!" she declared. "I can't bear to think of your going; I have enjoyed this summer so much."

"Even if I have organized a Christian Endeavor Society," laughed Ella.



"That is one reason I am so thankful you came," replied Bertha. "It has helped me so much. I did n't use to be able to say anything, and now it is not hard at all."

"I think that is the way with everything we do for Christ," said Ella. "If we are willing, and really try, he always helps us."

"O Ella!" exclaimed Bertha, "I did not know anything about working for Christ until you came. You have helped me so much."

"I am so glad," said Ella, with shining eyes, "for helping souls is to be my life work."

Bertha did not like to ask questions, though the expression of her cousin's face made her very curious; but presently Ella turned to her with the abrupt question: —

"What are you going to wear this evening?"

"What a frivolous creature you are!" laughed Bertha. "It won't take me long to decide on my toilet; I have nothing but my cashmere."

"How did you happen to choose black for summer?" asked Ella. "Do you prefer it to shades?"

"My dear Ella," said Bertha lightly, "I never get a summer wardrobe. When I need it, I get a good dress, and keep it for my best as long as I



can, then make it over. As long as there is a rag of it left it does duty in some way."

"Why did you select black?" asked Ella.

"Because it is such a good color to wear," replied Bertha. "My dresses have to do duty so long I get tired of colors."

"Why do you never wear white?" asked Ella.

"Do you feel too old?"

"Oh, no," laughed Bertha; "but I can't afford it, it soils so easily."

"But white goods are so cheap," said Ella, "and canvas cloth makes up very prettily."

"But they get soiled, and that is the end of them. A plain black cashmere is better for me. It is good enough for an Endeavor Social, and that is all the dissipation I shall indulge in."

"I want to ask a great favor of you, Bertha," said Ella gravely. "May I fix your dress a little for this evening?"

"How?" asked Bertha in surprise.

"With a piece of white surah silk I have. I think I can make it very pretty, if you are willing to trust me."

"Of course I am," Bertha replied. "But why take the trouble? The dress is good enough for me."



"Take it down. I'll be back in a minute."

She ran into her own room, and soon returned with a piece of creamy white silk, smelling faintly of heliotrope.

"Don't be frightened," said she, beginning to rip recklessly at the plain black basque. "I have kept my talents in a napkin all summer, and you have no idea what a genius I have for fixing dresses."

"What are you going to do?" asked Bertha, watching her cousin rip up her dress in some dismay.

"Take this choker off," replied Ella calmly. "No one wears this kind of collar now."

"I know it," said Bertha meekly, "but they were worn when I had the dress made."

"They went out of fashion all at once," said Ella, "and I was glad to see them go, for, though they were just the thing for long necks, they were abominable on me. You ought not to wear them either, Bertha: your throat is too white and pretty to hide."

"How can one keep in fashion?" sighed Bertha. "My dresses are out of style before they are finished. If I adopted all the little quirks, like



collars and puffed sleeves, it would take all my time."

"It does n't take all my time," said Ella, "and I attend to all the little quirks. I am fond of pretty clothes, I own, but I do not give all my time and thoughts to them as some girls do."

"You have plenty of time and money," said Bertha.

"And don't use half as much of either on my clothes as you think I do," she declared. "I am going to produce a very pretty dress for you without using a bit of money, and very little time."

"Can't I help?" asked Bertha.

"Yes," replied Ella in a businesslike tone; "you can gather this silk."

Bertha got a fine needle and spool of white silk, and sat down, feeling rather odd to be doing anything so pretty and dainty for herself.

That evening Ella slipped a pale pink dressing-sack over her white skirts, and, presenting herself again at Bertha's door, found her combing her hair, while Harry sat on the bed buttoning her boots.

"I have another great favor to ask of you, Bertha," said she, "and then I will leave you in peace forever."



"What is it?" asked Bertha; "I am prepared for anything."

"Let me cut and curl your hair."

Bertha sank into a chair, leveling her brush in dumb surprise at her cousin.

"I did n't ask to cut your head off," said she, "only your hair."

"Do let her, Bird," pleaded Harry.

"At my time of life!" groaned Bertha.

"Older ladies than you wear curled wings," said Ella. "I'll promise not to make you look younger than twenty."

"But how shall I curl it?" asked Bertha.

"With my curler, till you get one of your own."

"Oh, do cut it right away!" cried Harry, jumping up. "Let's scalp her. I'll hold her head," and she seized her sister round the neck, while Ella clashed the shears over their victim.

"I submit! I submit!" cried Bertha. "Don't murder me."

"The victim is ready," cried Harry, dancing about excitedly. "Bring on your instruments, and begin."

Bertha gave herself up, and Ella began to comb out her long hair.



"Your hair is just lovely," said she. "You have twice as much as I have."

"But it is n't half as pretty," said Bertha from behind the veil Ella had combed over her face.

"Yours will put mine in the shade when I get it arranged," said she. "Now for the fatal clip! There! a Boston barber could n't have done it better."

"But see how much of my wig you have sacrificed!"

"You could spare it just as well as not," declared Ella, "and never miss it."

"Now curl it," said Harry, "and let us see how it is going to look."

"No," said Ella, "I am going to do her back hair first."

Bertha submitted patiently to the hairdressing, finding it rather a novel sensation to have her head of interest to any but herself; but when she confronted her image in the glass, she gazed at it in silent amazement. Ella had drawn her hair up on the top of her head, and fastened it in a loose knot, which showed the curves of her graceful little head, while the wavy fringe in front shaded the white forehead, and gave to her face a girlish look which it had never worn before.



"Do you like it?" asked Ella anxiously.

"I think so," said Bertha slowly, "but it does n't look like me."

"It's prettier; that's all," said Harry frankly. "It's awfully becoming. Now that you have sheared the sheep, Ella, suppose you take the lamb."

"No," said Ella decidedly. "Your hair curls naturally, and you could n't wear it any other way that would be more becoming. Now let us see how the dress is going to look."

"When are you going to dress?" demanded Bertha.

"Oh, never mind me," laughed Ella. "I feel as I used to when I had a new doll. Don't tumble your hair putting on the skirt."

Ella watched anxiously, afraid lest her work should not prove a good fit. But her fears were soon put to rest, for the dress was perfect. The soft white silk, gathered into a loose front, made the dress look like a new one, and, the tight choker being gone, Bertha's white throat showed with a good effect against the black.

"I don't believe I shall like it," said Bertha, "my neck is so bare."



"You are not used to it, that is all," laughed Ella. "But I 'll remedy it," and running into her own room, she soon returned with a piece of velvet ribbon, which she tied round her cousin's throat.

"There, now you are just perfect," she declared, "and look nice."

"I don't feel or look like myself," she complained.

"You are like Cinderella after the fairy godmother came," said Harry gayly.

"More like the jackdaw in the borrowed plumes," laughed her sister.

"Your hair and dress are your own property, madam," said Ella. "You neither stole nor borrowed them."

"When are you going to dress?" asked Bertha.

"I 'll get into my clothes now," said she. "It won't take me two minutes to dress."

"I will go downstairs and wait," began Bertha, but Ella cried imploringly, "Oh, don't, until I am ready! I want to see the effect you 'll produce on the boys."

"All right," replied Bertha. "I feel like a Paris doll that has just arrived."



Ella dressed with nimble fingers, and soon came back arrayed in a black and white India silk.

“Now we are ready,” said she, throwing a delicate white wrap over her arm, “and will proceed to the sitting room and create a sensation.”



## CHAPTER XVI.

*THE ENDEAVOR SOCIAL.*

THE boys had been ready some time, and Clifford, in his best suit, with shining linen and carefully brushed hair, was holding a large skein of soft white wool for his aunt, while Joe sat before the fire looking and feeling like a martyr. He did n't want to go to the social at all, for, as he expressed it, he felt like a fool standing round among a parcel of girls; but Ella had coaxed him into it, and he had gotten into his best clothes, frowning at his image in the glass as he struggled with his collar button, and muttering imprecations in regard to his cuffs. He did not see how Clifford could appear so much at home in his best clothes, for he did n't know how to act in his, and was so painfully conscious of his arms and legs when he went into company, that he could not enjoy himself.



"How long it takes a girl to rig up," growled this young gentleman. "All they think about is their duds."

"What a blessing it is to be a man!" remarked Clifford. "We don't have to curl our topknots. Don't you wish your wig did n't cause you any more trouble than mine does, auntie?"

"I do not wear a wig," replied Miss Moore. "My hair all grew on my head once, but I always save my combings, and have them manufactured into switches. There, that is done. To think of having to send to Boston to match a skein of yarn! How can people live in such a benighted place?"

Kezia sniffed disdainfully, and remarked something to the effect that they managed to get along very well, but the entrance of the girls interrupted the conversation.

"We have come down to receive your compliments," said Harry. "How do we look?"

Clifford rose and made a grand bow.

"I am struck dumb with admiration," said he, "and have no words to express my feelings."

"There!" said Harry indignantly, "I said those stupid boys would n't notice anything."



"Do I understand your remark to be addressed to me, Miss White?" asked Clifford with dignity.

"Yes, it is," she retorted. "A girl might powder her hair white and dress in a bag, and you boys would n't notice it."

At this speech Clifford walked round his cousin, gravely inspecting her from head to foot, as she stood in her simple white dress, her curls tied up with a knot of scarlet ribbon.

"Your hair is not white," said he, "and I don't think that dress was made out of a bag. Auntie, lend me your glasses, and let me see if they will help me discover what Harry has done to herself."

"I did n't say I had done anything," pouted Harry, as Clifford adjusted his aunt's glasses to his nose. "Do look at Bird, and see if you can discover any change."

"Oh!" said Joe, in a tone of deep contempt, "she 's banged her hair."

"There, Bertha White!" cried Kezia, "I thought you had more sense. Harry 'll be fringing hers next."

"I hope you are not disappointed, Ella?" said Bertha, turning merrily to her cousin.



"But I am," she replied, "for I expected them to fall flat with admiration."

"You are real mean," pouted Harry. "You might pay her one compliment, I should think."

Clifford gravely inspected Bertha through his aunt's eyeglasses, as she stood in the middle of the room laughing and blushing. "You look very pretty, Bird," said he, as he finished his survey.

"Thank you," said Bertha warmly, for she liked the boy's frank compliment. "Is n't it time to go? Let me see if your necktie is straight, Joe."

"I'm all right," said Joe, twitching from under his sister's hands. "You girls might be content with prinking yourselves, and let us fellows alone."

"Let me pull your coat sleeves down over your cuffs," persisted Bertha. "There, now you look very well, Joseph."

"Don't you want a flower in your buttonhole, Joe?" asked Harry teasingly. "I'll get you one if you do, and then you will be perfectly killing."

"I won't go at all if you don't let me alone," growled Joe.

"Joe is my knight," said Ella, coming to the



rescue. "Boys don't like to go with their own sisters, so he can escort me."

"Cliff and I will swap," said Joe with a grin. "He need n't think he's got the best of the bargain, for you are worth more than the other two put together."

"What an amazing compliment!" cried Ella. "Now you must put on my cloak, like a gallant knight."

Joe received the dainty white wrap in some dismay, and gravely inspected it inside and out.

"How does it go?" he demanded.

"You must throw it over my shoulders. Oh, not that way! You have put it on upside down."

"Does that go on your head?" he asked, giving the ornamental hood a twitch when he had succeeded in getting the wrap on right at last.

"No; I shall put this scarf on my head," replied Ella. "Now please button my glove."

"Oh, I can't," cried Joe. "My fingers are all thumbs."

"But you must," she persisted, still holding out her little hand.

"The girls round here button their own gloves," said Joe ungallantly, "and don't ask us fellows to quirk over 'em."



"They would like to have you all the same," declared Ella. "Practice on me, and when you can do it nicely, offer to button Nan's some time, and see how pleased she will be."

"The fellows would laugh," said Joe confidentially.

"They are not worth minding," said Ella, "and I know some who would not. Nice, gentlemanly boys always button their mother's and sisters' gloves."

"Cliff don't have to milk," said Joe, giving his handsome cousin an envious glance.

"You may not have to always," said Ella in a comforting tone. "But we shall be late if we don't start."

Joe obeyed his cousin, and succeeded in pulling off two buttons in his attempt to fasten her gloves.

"There, see what I have done!" said he. "Guess you wish you had buttoned 'em yourself, now."

"Never mind," said Ella cheerfully. "No damage is done but what I can easily repair. We are ready at last. Good-night, auntie and Kezia."

The house was brilliantly lighted, and as they went up the walk they could see figures moving



about between the half-drawn curtains. As they stood on the steps a terrible attack of bashfulness seized Joe, and he would rather have taken the dentist's chair than entered those rooms full of people. His legs felt as though they were galvanized as he went into the hall. He never knew how he made his bow to his hostess, but at last found himself in the parlor, seated between two girls.

The guests were all members of the Endeavor Society,—girls that he saw every day,—but if they had been titled ladies he would not have felt more awkward or ill at ease. He looked at Clifford and wondered how he could talk with those stranger girls as easily as he did with Harry at home. He could not think of a single thing to say to the young lady beside him, but was all the time trying to hide his red hands and dispose of his long legs.

But he was not even allowed to sit in his obscure corner long, for some girls came down from the dressing room, and Clifford, seeing that the chairs were all occupied, sprang up and offered them his. Joe knew that he must do the same, though he never could understand why boys and



men had no right to sit down when girls and women were standing. On the present occasion he thought he needed the chair much more than the girls did, but, since the law of good breeding decreed it otherwise, he must submit. So with a jerk and bow something like a jackknife with a good spring, he rose and offered his chair to Lucy Nash. She took it with a low "Thank you," and poor Joe was left to the agony of standing.

The act had been one of the simplest on Clifford's part, and he stood easily on his legs, still talking with the girls, as his cousin had seen him do countless times in their own sitting room; but Joe stood like a ramrod, his arms folded in a tight knot, looking as uncomfortable as he felt. If some of the other girls had been in Lucy's place they might have helped him, but she was as bashful as he, and sat with her hands folded meekly in her lap, in utter silence.

It was not a very social gathering. The girls, dressed in their best, looked bright and pretty, but the party feeling was too strong for them to be free and easy. Ella had been taken possession of by the hostess, who enjoyed the young stranger from the outside world, and could do



nothing to relieve the stiffness. Bertha was shut off by herself by the piano until John Murry entered the room and was provided with a seat near her. As good evenings were exchanged his eyes rested on her with a pleased glance, and though he could not have told what she had done to alter her appearance, he thought how well she was looking, and wondered why he had never before noticed how pretty she was.

Etta Stewart was chairman of the Social Committee, and as soon as John was seated she came up to him.

"How stiff every one is!" said she. "I should think they had never seen each other before."

"I think we are doing very well," said John glancing round the room. "They will be more social by and by."

"There is the stiffest set of people in this town that I ever saw!" declared the young lady. "We can't have anything here because they won't be social, but act as though they were afraid of each other in a place like this."

"What would you have them do?" asked John, looking much amused.

"Why can't they move about," she replied,



"instead of sitting round the room, looking as though they were at a funeral?"

"It is n't always easy to move about," said John, "but as you and I are the oldest we might set them an example. Will you take my arm and make a tour of the room? Perhaps the others would join in and form a procession."

"There are n't gentlemen enough to go round," laughed Miss Stewart. "There never are in this town." Turning to Bertha, she continued, "I think your cousin might do something to entertain the young people. She has n't spoken to any one but Mrs. Nelson."

"Mrs. Nelson is asking her about some mutual friends," replied Bertha. "She can't leave her very well."

"Mrs. Nelson ought not to monopolize her," Miss Stewart declared. "Your cousin ought to contrive to get away from her."

"How can she?" asked Bertha indignantly. "Mrs. Nelson is her hostess, and is enjoying her talk with Ella so much."

"Why don't you open your program?" asked John. "I think they are waiting for that."

"I am waiting for Mr. Smith," she replied, "but



of course he will be late ; he is never on time anywhere."

"Here he is now," said John, as the hall door slammed. "You can't say he is n't on time to-night."

Miss Stewart accosted the minister as soon as he entered the room. Adjusting his eyeglasses, he announced the first piece on the program, which was Nan and Clifford's duet.

The program was listened to very quietly. No one talked while the performers went through their part, only the girls whispered a few comments on their manners and appearance.

Harry sat beside Emma Baker, and looked enviously across the room to where Nan and Clifford seemed to be having such a good time. Emma was to read, and held her book open on her lap.

"I should have thought they would have asked you to read," said she to Harry. "You are the only girl left off the program."

"I don't care," said jealous Harry. "I hate to read in public."

"I don't mind it a bit," said Emma complacently. "I guess I know why they did n't ask you



to read; it's because you are not an active member. Etta said you ought to be."

"Don't know how she knows," said Harry shortly.

"You read as well as any one," said Emma in a patronizing tone. "Ella and Cliff are going to play now. Is Ella's dress India silk? She is awful stylish. I think Cliff is awfully handsome; but don't tell him I said so, will you?"

"You need n't worry," said Harry contemptuously; "there is no danger."

"Nan thinks so too," Emma continued. "She is trying awfully hard to get him."

"No such a thing!" said Harry indignantly. "Nan Winters is n't that kind of a girl."

"Oh, is n't she!" replied Emma. "What does she ask him down there every evening for? Mamma says she would n't want me to invite him to my house so much."

"He goes there to practice," said Harry hotly.

"That duet needed lots of rehearsing," laughed Emma. "I don't believe he likes Nan any better than he does the other girls, but we don't run after him as she does. See how J. Murry watches Ella. He is in love with her; every one says so."



Harry tried to turn a deaf ear to Emma's gossip, but she could not escape it until it was time for that young lady to read, when she quietly changed her seat.

When the program was finished the company broke up in little groups, and Ella rescued poor Joe.

"Come into the library," said she; "we are going to play games."

In the library, Nan and Clifford were preparing for a game of parlor croquet, and Joe forgot his bashfulness as he and Ella joined them. When one game was finished Nan found a checkerboard, and she and Joe sat down to a sharply contested game; and with Nan for an opponent at his favorite pursuit of checkers, Joe's opinion of socials underwent a change.

Harry, in the meanwhile, was not enjoying herself. The feeling of jealousy still rankled, and instead of joining the others in the library, as she longed to do with all her heart, she went into the dining room, where a game of bean bags was arranged.

Harry was good at bean bags, for she could throw her bag with as true an aim as a boy, and



she soon counted up to the number chosen, leaving the others far behind; but it was too easy a victory for Harry to enjoy it, and they were just throwing down the bags, when Clifford appeared on the scene.

"Bean bags!" he exclaimed. "Put the number up to five hundred, and have a game," and he threw a bag through the hole in a way that showed Harry she had found her match.

The interest revived, and, with Harry captain of one side and Clifford of the other, they had some spirited games, which drew the others round the door to watch them.

"How hard they are working," said John, as Harry stood with flushed cheeks throwing the bags with true aim and calling out the numbers in a triumphant voice.

Bertha had a novel experience that evening. She was not one of those girls who receive compliments wherever they go, and those paid to her filled her with pleasure. They were from the girls, who frankly expressed their opinion on the change in her appearance.

"You look awfully pretty," Emma Baker had said. "Bangs are very becoming."



Nan's pleased her better, however : " We have just been saying how nice every one looks to-night," said she, " and I have heard many admire your hair."

Bertha had never heard her hair admired before, and it pleased her to think that the girls thought it was pretty. Whatever the social was to others, it was an evening of enjoyment to Bertha, and one that she never forgot.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## LENDING A HAND.

"COME, Bird, hurry up ; we can't wait all night !"

"Yes, in a minute," called back Bertha from above ; "I 'm coming right away."

"So are Christmas and Fourth of July. Any time will do."

"Don't hurry her, Harry," said Ella. "She has been just as busy as she could be all the afternoon."

"Bird would stop and put her necktie on just so if the house was burning down," grumbled Harry. "She is a regular old maid."

"No," corrected Ella, "she is a young maid. I shall not let you call Bertha old, for she and I are just of an age."

Ella was seated on the back seat of the double wagon, which stood before the door waiting for Bertha, who had not yet come downstairs. Harry



had been calling her from the hall, while Clifford stood beside Bob White, stroking the nose of that patient steed, who never made the least objection to waiting.

Bertha ran downstairs at last, drawing on her gloves, just as Joe came round from the back door with a large basket in each hand.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," said Bertha, "but it is all the fault of my hair. If you had not cut it off it would not take me so long to arrange it."

"I'll forgive you," said Ella, making room for her cousin on the seat beside her, "and so will everybody else."

"I'll lend a hand with those, Joseph," said Clifford, seizing a basket. "Cheese cakes! Give Kezia my love, and tell her that I'll never forget her."

"There is a lemon pie in this one," replied Joe. "I wish I was going."

"I hope it will be good," said Bertha anxiously. "I put the frosting on in such a hurry I'm afraid it won't be stiff enough."

"It does look rather flat," said Joe, lifting the cover of the basket to inspect the pie. "Better



leave it at home; we'll eat it if it is n't first class."

"I appreciate your offer, Joe," said his sister, "but will not impose on your generosity by making you dispose of the pie."

"All aboard!" asked Clifford, taking up the reins. "Good-by, auntie. You'll think of 'em while I'm away; won't you?"

Miss Moore came to the door to see them off.

"Don't sit on the ground, Ella," she called after them, "and be sure you put your shawl on coming home."

Ella gayly promised to heed her aunt's wishes, and they drove down the lane, leaving Joe and Miss Moore watching them from the front steps, while Kezia stood in the kitchen door gayly waving her apron.

From a scattered township, made up mostly of farms, had come the call: "Come over and help us." They had heard of the Christian Endeavor Society, and the success it had met with in Oakland, and they, too, wanted to organize one, and see if it would not put new life into their little church.

They had no minister, and only once in a while,



when a state or county missionary came to them, or Mr. Smith or some other neighboring minister could spare time from his own duties to go and "hold forth the word of life" to them, did they open their little white church for any preaching service. They kept up a Sunday school and prayer meeting during the summer, but in the winter the people lived so far apart, and the roads were so filled up with snow, that they thought it impossible to keep up any religious meetings whatever.

A girl from Marshlands, as the place was called, had been attending the Oakland high school when Ella started the Christian Endeavor movement there, and had become so interested that she had written to Harry, asking her if some of the Oakland society would not come out and help them organize one.

The day fixed upon was Saturday, always a busy time at the Whites'. Bertha and Kezia had cooked all the morning, for Harry and her friend had planned a picnic supper in a grove near the church, and several of the new society were invited to be present.

They had been delayed about starting, and it



was nearly five o'clock when they stopped to pick up John Murry. Things had gone contrary all day, and the young housekeeper had been sorely tried. At the last minute callers had come, and Bertha, who had not had time to change her dress, had been obliged to receive them in her wrapper.

"Everybody knows and appreciates the great things which try men's souls," said she as they stopped at Mr. Murry's gate, "but the world does not realize how many little things there are to try the patience of us poor women."

"But God does," said Ella brightly. "He knows and sympathizes with every petty annoyance."

"I know it," replied Bertha. "If it was n't for that thought I could not get through with some of my days."

"Do you feel hopeful of this new society?" asked John, turning round to the three girls from his seat beside Clifford.

"Yes, indeed," replied Ella decidedly. "From their letters I think they are very much in earnest."

"I'm afraid they will not be able to carry it on during the winter," said Bertha thoughtfully.

"Why not?" asked Ella.



"Because the men and boys all go logging, and spend the winter in the camps in the woods."

"But the women and girls don't," said Ella, "and they can carry on a Christian Endeavor Society without the men and boys. They are not absolutely necessary."

"Bertha appreciates us," remarked Clifford, "and knows nothing can be done without us."

"No, I don't, Cliff," laughed Bertha. "I know you are not necessary to the success of a Christian Endeavor Society, though you are very nice to have sometimes; but in Marshlands not only the men and boys go into the woods, but they take all the horses with them. The people live miles from the church and the roads drift so badly that they have to be shoveled out, so you see how almost impossible it will be to carry on a Christian Endeavor Society under those circumstances."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Ella. "What do the poor women do, left behind in the snow-banks?"

"Annie Marston says they den," said Harry, "like the bears."

"Only think of it!" said Ella soberly. "No



church! no society! no circulating library! How they must dread the winter!"

"I say, Ella," said Clifford suddenly, "how would it do to send down a box of books, some of the new publications? They could circulate them round, you know."

"That is a good idea, Clifford," said John, looking at the boy admiringly.

"Yes," said Ella warmly; "that is just what we can do. We will select the books, and send them down about Christmas time."

Bertha sighed softly, and thought, as she often had that summer, how nice it must be to be situated as her cousin was, and to be able to perform so many deeds of kindness.

Harry was to pilot them to her friend's house. She had been there once, and was sure that she knew the place; but her bump of locality was not very good, and when they entered the township of Marshlands she could not tell which of the scattering houses belonged to Mr. Marston.

"It had a front door on the side," said she, looking about for a landmark.

"Most of them have front doors," remarked Clifford.



"You know what I mean," said Harry with a pout. "This one had the door on the side instead of in the middle."

But as no such house appeared they drove on until they came to the church, where Annie Marston and a number of other girls were waiting for them.

"We had almost given you up," said Annie, advancing to the carriage. "It was growing so late."

"Have we passed your house?" asked Harry eagerly.

"Yes ; it is the second one in town, you know."

"I was n't sure we were in town then," Harry confessed, "and so did n't dare stop. It did have a front door on the side," she added triumphantly. "These are my cousins, Mr. and Miss Preston, Miss Marston."

"I am very glad to meet you, Miss Marston," said Ella, reaching down to shake hands, while Clifford raised his cap. "I have heard a great deal of you from Harry."

"My brother will take your horse," said Annie. "We are going to have the picnic in this grove, so if you like you can get out here."



Marshlands was a beautiful place in summer, whatever it might be in winter, and the guests were filled with admiration as they climbed up into the grove, lighted by the warm, low rays of the setting sun.

They had a merry picnic supper, and then went into the little church, which was brightly lighted and prettily decked with flowers in honor of the occasion. Bertha was surprised to see the large number of earnest, wide-awake looking young people who came in and soon filled up the seats.

"They have a more hopeful beginning than we had," she whispered to Ella.

"Yes," her cousin replied, "and Annie tells me that they mean to try and keep the meetings up all winter, in spite of the snow-banks and absence of men, boys, and horses."

John was chairman of the meeting, and soon a society, consisting of twelve active and as many more associate members, was organized. When the business was completed they had a brief praise and testimony meeting.

Clifford had brought his cornet, and that, with the good cabinet organ which the little church pos-



sessed, made the singing so inspiring that every one that could joined in.

At the close the members of the new society gathered round the strangers, thanking them warmly for the help and advice they had given them, eagerly making promises with the Oakland young people to visit each other's societies, and lend a hand whenever they could in the new work going on. It was some time before Clifford and John could get the girls out to where the wagon was waiting for them.

But good-bys were said at length, and they started for home. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and Clifford let Bob White take his own jog, for no one was anxious to shorten the journey.

"There is the house with the front door," remarked Clifford as they passed Annie Marston's home.

"Now, you need n't make fun," pouted Harry. "You would n't recognize the house if you did n't see it again for six months."

"It won't be six months before Harry sees that house again," prophesied John. "I think we will exchange visits often, and that the new society will help us as much, and more, than we have helped them."



"It has done me good already," said Bertha soberly, "they are so wide-awake and interested."

"They have more members now than we have," said Harry.

"I know it," sighed Bertha. "It makes me feel discouraged."

"Remember, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts,'" quoted Ella. "Don't go back to your bad habits, and become a doubting Thomas again, Bertha."

"No, I am going to try to 'Look up and not down, forward and not back, and lend a hand' wherever I can," said she humbly. "It does us so much good to lend a hand, I wonder why we don't do it oftener?"

"I hope we will in the future," said John. "If we want our own society to grow we must reach out and help others."

A little pause followed his last words, and then Clifford said, "Let us sing something."

Throw out the Life-line across the dark wave,  
There is a brother whom some one should save;  
Somebody's brother! oh, who then will dare  
To throw out the Life-line, his peril to share?

sang Ella, and, one after the other, they took up



the chorus, until their voices in perfect harmony rang out sweet and clear on the still night air.

They sang all the way home, and once when they stopped to water the horse, the door of a house on the other side of the road softly opened, and a woman stood by it, listening to the sweet, tuneful voices singing the dear old song that will never wear out:—

Way down upon the Suwanee River,  
Far, far away,  
There 's where my heart is turning ever,  
There 's where the old folks stay.

Bob White had got all the water he wanted, but still stood there, nibbling the grass growing round the mossy old trough, for Clifford had seen the door open, and, rightly guessing that they were giving pleasure to some one, would not drive on until the song was finished.

“Well,” said Harry when the last note of “Suwanee River” died away, and no one started another song, “has Bob White gone to sleep?”

“No, indeed,” declared Clifford. “He is listening to the music. He is very fond of singing, especially *good* singing.”



"We won't get home to-night if we linger this way," said Ella. "We must drive on."

Clifford jumped into the wagon, and started Bob White out of the reverie into which he had fallen; but for a long time none of the party ever heard the strains of "Suwanee River" without thinking of the song sung by the old watering trough.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

*A NEW ACTIVE MEMBER.*

SCHOOL began the first of September. The long summer vacation was over, and the young people were obliged to go to work.

"What shall we do when Ella and Clifford go away?" asked Bertha of John one Monday evening.

"We shall miss them very much," he replied, "but perhaps some one will come forward to fill their place in the ranks."

"There is no one here who can fill Ella's place," Bertha declared.

"I know it would be difficult," he replied, glancing at Ella, who was talking with Lucy Nash. "Can't you persuade her to stay?" he asked Bertha with a laugh.

"That would be impossible," Bertha replied. "Nothing would induce her to stay here."

"No one can blame her," said Etta Stewart,



"for who would stay here, if they could get away?"

"This is n't the worst place in the world," said John. "It 's not so bad, if one makes the best of it."

"I don't know where you 'll find a worse place," said Miss Stewart with a laugh that was not altogether pleasant.

"I do not like to think so badly of my native town," said Bertha, "for I feel as though the people must be to blame for it."

"They are," Miss Stewart declared. "If you had been away and seen how different things are in other places, you would realize what a dull old town this is."

Miss Stewart had been to Boston, and Bertha had not, so she did not have the courage to say more in defense of her native place; but John spoke up laughingly, —

"It is absurd to compare this place to a large town or city, but we stand very well beside villages of the same size."

"I should think we did!" the young lady retorted. "Every one knows that this is the dullest town in the State."



"But there is no reason why we can't have a flourishing Christian Endeavor Society," he replied, "and with God's help we shall."

"I hope so," said Bertha with a sigh.

"You must n't grow faint-hearted, Bertha," said John cheerfully, "because your cousin is going away. The Holy Spirit will not leave us."

"Ella Preston is not the main stay of this society," spoke up Etta. "We can carry it on without her."

John and Bertha were prevented a reply by Ella herself, who came up with a radiant face. "I have some one to take my place," said she; "Lucy Nash is going to become an active member."

"What has become of the doctrine of close communion and baptism?" laughed Etta.

"They never troubled Lucy," said Ella gently. "She is a sweet, earnest girl, and I am so glad her mother has consented to her taking her place in the ranks."

"It will take two to fill your place, Ella," said Bertha, looking fondly at her cousin.

"I think not," said she merrily. "It would be more than filled if Harry should become an active member too."



"I have great hopes of Harry," said John decidedly.

"She ought to be an active member," Etta declared.

"Still, I don't know what we shall do without you, Ella," said Bertha sadly. "I can't bear to think of your going away."

"Bertha refuses to be comforted," laughed John. "What inducement can we offer to persuade you to stay, Miss Preston?"

"None," said Ella. "There is too strong a drawing in another direction."

The next afternoon Harry came home from school in a very sober frame of mind, while Joe, on the other hand, seemed in unusual good spirits, and chuckled and laughed as though he knew of some uncommonly good joke.

After supper Harry sat down on the front steps, and, propping her chin up on both hands, gazed disconsolately at the toes of her boots.

"I say, Harry," said Clifford, joining her, "let's get Bird and Ella, and have a game of Halma."

"I don't want to," said Harry shortly.

"What is the matter with you, Harry?" asked



Clifford, sitting down on the lower step and looking up in her face. "You don't seem exactly right in your mind."

"I am cross," said Harry with a frown, "so you had better go down to Nan's if you want any one to amuse you."

"Thank you, but I had rather stay here, if you please."

"I don't care what you do," said Harry shortly.

"What is the matter, Harry?" asked Clifford soberly. "You have n't got into some scrape at school, have you?"

"Yes, I have," she admitted.

"I thought I knew the symptoms," said Clifford. "I am always getting into them."

"So am I," sighed Harry; "but I never seemed to care so much before."

"Can't you own up, and come out square?" Clifford suggested. "Somehow I never feel so bad after I have made a clean breast of it."

"Oh, J. Murry knows all about it," replied Harry, "and that 's the worst of it."

"Tell me about it, Harry," said Clifford. "I know how to sympathize with any one in a scrape."

"When school began I resolved not to get into



any scrapes this term," said Harry mournfully, "and here I am in disgrace the very first week. It came so sudden, I did n't think of my promise until it was too late."

"That is always the way," replied Clifford. "I never know I am mad until I 'm ready to knock somebody down."

"Belle and I went into the reading-room to get some notes for the literature class," Harry continued. "We didn't mean to play at all, and only whispered a little, and hardly laughed once, but the laboratory is over the reading-room, and Ned and Fred Parks had gone up there to try some experiments with the chemicals; at least they pretended to be at work, but when they found we were in the reading-room they rigged a telegraph out of the window, and all the afternoon we sent poetry, notes, and pictures back and forth. Fred always has his pockets full of trash, and he sent down peanuts and candy, and some of the poetry was funny." And she drew a handful of peanut shells and scraps of paper from her pocket.

Clifford tried to look grave as he read some of the nonsense indited by the young gentlemen and dignified by the name of poetry, for he felt



the occasion demanded seriousness, and he said soberly, —

“Did n’t Mr. Murry know what was going on?”

“We thought he did n’t because he did n’t say anything, but after school he asked us to remain, and gave us a private lecture that broke me all up.”

“A fellow can stand most anything better than a private lecture,” said Clifford gravely, shaking his head.

“He said he was disappointed in me,” said Harry dolefully, “for he had expected great things of me this term. That is just it, Cliff; I had made up my mind to become an active member, and now I can’t.”

“Why not?” demanded Clifford.

“Why, Cliff, how can I call myself a Christian when I act so? Every one will say I am not fit.”

“Christ won’t,” declared Clifford with a glad ring in his voice. “He never says a person is not fit to come to him. He takes us just as we are.”

“But people will talk,” said poor Harry. “I know J. Murry thought I was not fit to become an active member, though he did n’t say so.”



“Now, Harry, J. Murry did n't think any such thing,” said Clifford decidedly. “You want Christ all the more because you are in danger of falling into temptation. If we were perfect we would not need a Saviour at all.”

“I thought when people became Christians they were always good.”

“They are not, by any means,” said Clifford earnestly. “Why, you know what a selfish, hot-tempered fellow I am !”

“O Cliff, if I was only as good as you are I would be happy,” said Harry with something like a sob.

“Christ is willing to give you as much as he has me, and here is his own word for it,” and taking out his pocket Bible he read by the light that streamed out from the hall behind them, “‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”

“You see, Harry,” he added, “that ‘whosoever’



includes every one. He does n't say the good and the perfect, but every one, no matter how sinful. We shall always be sinful till we come to Christ, for he is the only one who can take away our sin."

"I did n't know what it meant to be a Christian till this summer," said Harry thoughtfully. "I supposed one had to go through what they called an experience."

"All the experience I know is to say that I will accept Christ for my Saviour," said Clifford earnestly. "We don't really know anything about Christ till we take the first step; then he reveals himself to us. Alan Thorn says that being a Christian is n't living a life of perfect goodness, but it is becoming as a little child, and growing up in the Father's likeness. We have to begin at the beginning, down at the little humble place at Jesus' feet, and wait for his call to come up higher. O Harry, won't you make this beginning?"

"Yes, Cliff, I will," said Harry in a tone of deep feeling that meant a great deal.

Clifford joyfully seized her hand with a warm clasp that made her think of the right hand of fellowship; and the ear of her soul caught the



echo of the angels as they rejoiced over the lost one who had been brought back to the Father's house.

The next afternoon, on their return from school, Harry and Joe found a little group out under the apple trees. Bertha was sewing, Ella reading aloud, and Clifford, apparently in a state of exhaustion, was fanning himself with his straw hat.

"A letter for me, I know," said Ella, holding out her hand. "Please don't tease me, Joe."

"I got the mail myself," said Harry, taking the letter out of her school bag.

Ella tore it open eagerly, read a few words, then exclaiming, "O Cliff! he's through at last! Tell them all about it." She left her seat, and ran upstairs to her own room.

"What is it?" asked Bertha in surprise.

"Did n't know but what that letter was charged with dynamite by the way she ran," observed Joe.

"What did she say you were to tell us about, Cliff?" asked Harry.

"Nothing of any consequence," he replied. "Alan has got through all right, I suppose."



“Who is this Alan you have so much to say about?” demanded Harry.

“The minister ’s coming, mamma, mamma!  
The minister ’s coming, ha, ha, mamma!  
The minister ’s coming,  
And you can tell pa,  
For I cannot help it, now can I, mamma?”

hummed Clifford.

“Now, don’t be provoking,” coaxed Harry, “but tell us what Ella said you might.”

“Nothing but girls’ secrets,” said Joe, with his nose in the air. “Not worth telling.”

“Cliff has got to tell,” declared Harry. “You need n’t sit there looking so provoking.”

“Clifford,” said Bertha solemnly, “is Ella engaged?”

“I suppose she referred to the wedding,” he replied.

“Whose wedding? — yours?” asked Harry sarcastically.

“Don’t you wish it was?” he replied with a saucy wink. “No; I ’m only chief mourner, and, as the staff and support of the family, will have to give her away.”



"Clifford!" said Bertha with a gasp, "is Ella going to be married?"

"When? and whom to?" cried Harry excitedly. "Mean thing not to tell us a word about it! We won't give her a bit of a wedding present."

"It won't be till spring," said Clifford. "You are all coming up, and Joe will be best man."

"J. Murry will be chief mourner," chuckled Joe.

"Bird's face is long enough now for that," laughed Clifford. "Kezia would say she was 'dumfounded.'"

"Why did n't she tell us?" said Bertha. "I never dreamed of anything of the kind."

"Oh, she and Alan are odd sticks," replied Clifford. "When I'm engaged you shall know all about it,—how I pop the question and everything."

"Alan!" cried Harry. "Is he the one?"

"She's engaged to Alan Thorn."

"But he is an old man."

"About twenty-six, or seven."

"But he's a minister."

"Going to be some time. He's only half a one now. He's been spending the summer at Five Points, New York."

"Why did n't he come here?" asked Harry.



"It would n't be Alan to do that," said Clifford with sparkling eyes. "He has spent his vacation working among the wretches at Five Points, and sent whole carloads of children for a breath of pure air down to a farm that a band of King's Daughters own."

"Is n't he splendid!" cried Harry. "I should have thought Ella would have wanted us to know about him."

"She has worried all summer for fear he would get the smallpox, or some other dreadful disease, and that is why we packed her off down here, to divert her mind by seeing new places and people."

"He has left that place now?" asked Harry eagerly.

"Yes; and we must go and meet him in Boston. There will be time for a jolly week at our cottage at the Neck before school begins."

"Oh, dear, you are going away," said Harry with a long face.

"Here, Joe, lend Harry your bandanna," said Clifford, "so we can sit down and weep together."

"I don't believe you care a bit," pouted Harry.

"Of course he don't," declared Joe, "and who



blames him? Wish I could leave this dull old hole."

"Don't I just hate to say good-by!" said Clifford. "I have had a jolly good time, and I'm coming again next summer."

"I don't believe you will," Harry replied. "You will have to go to your cottage at the Neck, or else take a walking trip through the White Mountains. You will never come down here again, or see any of us."

"Nonsense!" retorted Clifford. "You are all coming up to the wedding, and I'll take you round and show you the sights."

"You won't, for you know we can't afford to go to Boston."

"Will you snap my head off if I say I am coming down here?" asked Clifford meekly. "I tell you what! I'll come down to your graduation. What fine young ladies you and Nan will be then! And Joe will be a great swell in a swallowtail coat and kid gloves. I shall be a Harvard man. What great creatures we shall be!"

"You can make a note of it," said Harry, watching him write the date in his notebook, "but I don't believe you will come."



"But I will," he declared, "and will throw a bouquet as big as my head at the valedictorian. I wonder if it will be you or Nan?"

"Nan, probably," Harry replied.

"Then you will be prophetess," Clifford continued, "and Joe will deliver the Latin salutatory in dress coat and white kids."

"I shall be on a cattle ranch by that time," declared that young man. "I'm not going to spend my time digging at Greek and Latin."

Bertha, meanwhile, had gone upstairs, and tapped softly at her cousin's door. Ella opened it, her eyelashes still wet.

"Why did n't you tell me before, Ella?" asked Bertha reproachfully.

"I could n't," said she. "But now he is coming home well and strong, and I am so happy!"

For once Bertha forgot all about the supper as she sat and talked with Ella about her lover, until Kezia rang the bell, and, going downstairs, she found them all at the table.



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE CONSECRATION MEETING.

As soon as the boarders left, Kezia packed her little black trunk and went home, leaving Bertha to pick up the fall work with a will, determined not to moan because life brought her so little enjoyment.

"So your cousin is engaged to a minister," said Etta Stewart as Bertha entered the vestry the first Monday evening after Ella and Clifford's departure.

"Yes," said Bertha, glancing at John, who was trying to make one of the dim lamps burn better, and thinking of the young people's jokes about him and Ella. He did not appear like a dejected lover as he worked the wick up and down in a most unromantic manner.

"She ought not to have kept her engagement a secret," Etta was saying. "It's the fashion to announce them."



"Ella did not care to, as we were all strangers," Bertha replied.

"I should have thought she would have told you," said Etta. "I never was more astonished in my life."

"Now, I was not at all surprised," said John, coming up wiping his fingers on his handkerchief.

"Why not?" demanded Etta, while Bertha regarded him curiously.

"Straws show which way the wind blows," he replied. "I thought Miss Preston was especially interested in some one all summer."

"You were more observing than most people," said Etta. "Even her cousin did n't suspect it."

He only laughed as a flock of girls came in with hymnbooks and Bibles in their hands; but Bertha felt vastly relieved, for she knew now that John could not have lost his heart to her cousin.

The young people missed both Clifford and Ella in their meetings, especially about the singing; for though Nan played the organ she could not start a familiar hymn as Ella had. Once, during a long pause, Bertha found courage to do it; but she had no confidence in herself, and what was so easy for her cousin was very hard for her.



The members grew discouraged as night after night the meetings grew worse, and they began to fear that their spirit and power had departed with the two most active members.

"We have so few active members," said Bertha one day, when the Prayer-meeting Committee, consisting of herself, Emma Baker, and Etta Stewart, was meeting with the latter, "and I'm afraid we won't have any more unless our meetings are better. Fewer come into them every night."

"The active members don't do their part," Etta declared. "They must do something besides repeat a Bible verse if they want to make the meetings more interesting."

Now, as that was all the young lady herself ever did, Bertha did not know what reply to make, but looked into the open fire with a troubled face.

"What else can we do?" asked Emma. "I can't talk out of my head."

"Neither can I," said Etta. "My thoughts and feelings are too sacred to express in public as some do."

"Do you think so," asked Bertha, "at a meeting where we meet to talk about Christ?"

"I cannot speak of my inmost feelings any-



where," declared Etta. "The more I feel the less I can say."

"That's the way with me," said Emma eagerly, gladly justifying her conscience by agreeing with some one older.

"Then I think we have too much singing," Etta continued. "It looks as though we were working hard to make the meeting."

Bertha felt guilty at this statement, for she had started several hymns the Monday night before.

"Who will lead next Monday?" asked Emma.

"It is consecration meeting," replied Etta, "so I suppose John will lead; he always does, but I don't think he takes half the interest in the society that he ought to; if he did he would get more of the boys to join."

"He can't compel them if they don't want to," replied Bertha. "He has asked them, I know."

"He is n't as much interested as he ought to be," Etta repeated. "He is down to the school-house now; let us go and give him a talking to."

Bertha did not think it necessary to give John a talking to, but she rose and buttoned her jacket. Emma excused herself on the plea that she must



go home and help her mother, and the other two started for the academy.

It was a raw, gray day, with a sharp, chill wind blowing from the east. Before they reached the high school building they met the master hurrying along, his coat collar turned up to his ears.

"This is the day the Prayer Meeting Committee meets," said he, pausing. "Whom are you in search of to-day?"

"Go ahead, Bertha," ordered Etta. "You are chairman."

"Will you lead the consecration meeting next Monday evening?" asked Bertha.

"My turn comes pretty often, seems to me," said he, showing his white teeth in a smile.

"Only once a month," spoke up Etta. "That is no oftener than the president ought to lead."

"Of course I will," he replied. "But, girls, are you satisfied with the meetings?"

"Of course we are not," replied Etta. "We must do something to make them more interesting."

"I'll tell you what I think," said John, standing back to the wind. "We do not have prayers enough."



"We have a prayer every night," said Etta. "What more do you want?"

"The leaders ask Mr. Smith to lead in prayer," he replied earnestly, "and it becomes a mere form. I think every one of us ought to pray from our hearts for just what we feel that we need."

"Ella said they have sentence prayers," said Bertha suddenly. "The leader says a few words, and one after the other takes up the petition."

"That is what we need in our meetings," said John, "and why can't we have it? Our service now is that of the lips. Let us see if we can't make it that of the heart."

"None of the girls will make a prayer, I know," declared Etta.

"I will next Monday night," said Bertha, "and won't you? We are the two oldest members and ought to set the example."

"I could n't make a prayer in public to save me," said Etta decidedly.

"'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,'" said John gravely.

"It's very well for one like Paul to say that," Etta replied, "but I can't."

"Christ will give us the same grace he gave Paul," said John, "if we ask for it."



"But I can't pray in public," she repeated, "and it is no use talking about it. None of the other girls will either."

"How would it do to have our consecration meeting confined to the members?" asked John. "We would feel more freedom, and perhaps gain more strength."

"I wish we could," said Bertha earnestly.

"Whoever heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Etta. "The constitution says nothing of the kind," and she produced the copy which she always had ready to confront the members with on every occasion.

"Is that as binding as the laws of the Medes and Persians?" asked John impatiently. "Can't we amend it for our local society?"

"But who ever heard of turning people out of a religious meeting!" Etta exclaimed.

"Our monthly church meetings are private," Bertha suggested.

"That is altogether different," replied Etta. "We, as a Christian Endeavor Society, have no right to shut ourselves up, and say that only certain ones have a right to come to the meetings."

"It is only once a month," replied John, "and



any one that wants to can gain admittance by joining."

"Oh, you're a Mason," laughed Etta, "and think every society ought to have secret meetings."

"Well, it is too cold to stand here and argue about it," said John. "Bertha looks as though she was nearly frozen."

Etta Stewart was a persistent young lady, and though all the members, except Emma Baker, agreed with John in regard to the consecration meeting, Etta, backed by the constitution, had her own way, even against the president and Mr. Smith, who agreed that more of the Holy Spirit was needed in the meetings, and that the work must begin in the hearts of the members first.

The consecration meeting was held as usual. Mr. Smith and John offered prayer, and the members answered to their names by a verse of Scripture. There was less singing than usual, for Bertha did not have the courage to start a hymn after what Etta had said.

At the close John asked the members to remain, and when they were alone he introduced the subject he had discussed with Bertha and Etta,



and plainly stated what he thought they needed to make their society one of real Christian endeavor.

They listened with serious faces, for they were in earnest, and had entered into the work with the sincerest of motives. At the close Etta expressed her views to Bertha in an undertone, to the effect that John Murry need n't dictate, if he was president, but she received no reply.

A day or two after, at a chance meeting, John said to Bertha, —

“If I were you, I would speak to the younger girls on the subject we were discussing the other day. It is n't those who have just started in the Christian life who shrink from new duties.”

Bertha assented with a wise smile, for she had just had a talk with Nan, Harry, and Lucy Nash, and was looking forward with renewed hope to the next Monday evening.

“Mr. Smith won't be here to-morrow night,” Etta informed her Sunday. “We won't have as good a meeting as usual.”

“Oh, I hope so,” said Bertha cheerfully, “though we shall miss Mr. Smith, he helps so much.”

“We have got to get some more active mem-



bers," Etta declared, "and those we have got must take more part."

"There is work for the Lookout Committee," said Bertha. "Each of us might take a certain one to pray for and do all we can to bring them to Christ."

"John Murry might take more interest," Etta replied. "Instead of lecturing us he ought to try and get some of his scholars to join. He ought to know that half a dozen could n't make a meeting."

Miss Stewart always laid the blame and responsibility on some one else. Although she was chairman of the Lookout Committee, it was John Murry's duty and not hers to try and win those who were out of Christ to accept him.

It did Bertha good after she left Etta to meet Nan and feel the warm clasp of her hand as she whispered,—

"We must all *pray* for the meeting to-morrow night, for Mr. Smith won't be with us."

John was right. It was not the young Christians who shrank from the new duties. Bertha knew that she had grown cold, and had forgotten the love and zeal with which she had first pledged herself to Christ's service, and Nan and Harry had



both helped her, and she felt better and stronger for their companionship.

Earnest prayers were offered for the meeting, and Bertha went to the vestry the next evening full of hope.

"Why, it is n't lighted!" exclaimed Harry, as they came in sight of the building.

Some dark figures came out of the shadows. One of them was Lucy Nash, her arms full of books, for she and Nan were to lead.

"I have been waiting here some time," said she, "but no one has come to light up."

"You must be nearly frozen," said Harry. "Why did n't you hunt up the boy and make him light up?"

"I did n't like to do that," Lucy replied.

"Well, I will," declared Harry.

The boy who was hired to take care of the room lived in the next house, and here Harry presented herself and demanded the reason why the vestry was not warmed and lighted as usual. The boy was not at home, but his mother excused him by saying that he had not heard the notice given the day before, and thought as Mr. Smith was away there would not be any meeting. Harry left her



in righteous indignation, and returned to the girls.

“To think we would n’t have a meeting because Mr. Smith is away!” she scolded. “Next week we ’ll have the notice given in the Sunday-school and evening meeting both.”

“And put it up in the post office besides,” added Nan.

“I suppose we will have to give up the meeting,” said Bertha, turning away sadly disappointed.

“I suppose so,” said Harry dolefully.

“Why can’t we light up?” asked a new voice.

It was one of the associate members that spoke. She and her friend had listened to all that had been said, but had not ventured a suggestion before, for between them and the others there was a gulf, they being known in country parlance as “hired girls;” that is, they did the work in some lady’s kitchen.

“We could n’t make the fire,” Harry replied, “and it is so cold it would take the room an hour to get warm.”

“Here is a girl who can make a good hot fire in no time,” said the first speaker, indicating her companion.



"Let us do it," said Bertha, who felt that she could not lose that meeting, she had prayed for it so earnestly.

"All right; I 'll go and get the key," said Harry, starting off again.

"It is so cold," said Nan doubtfully.

"Why, it is warmer outdoors than it is here," she added, as Harry unlocked the door.

It was certainly a cheerless prospect; but after stumbling about a while in the dark, Harry got one lamp lighted, and the two associate members attacked the stove. Bertha stripped off pieces of birch bark, while Nan and Harry finished lighting the lamps.

"We can not have a meeting," Nan declared. "It is n't prudent to stay here."

"If there was only something besides this large wood," said the girl who had undertaken to build the fire, down on her knees before the stove.

Bertha started to find some kindling, but when she reached the entry she encountered a crowd of boys, who, on learning what was wanted, took out their jackknives and went to work with a will.

"What is going on here?" demanded John,



stopping short in surprise at the sight of Bertha fishing sticks out of the woodbox.

She eagerly explained, rubbing her numb fingers, which were purple with cold.

"I know where there are some dry kindlings," and dropping hymnbook and Bible he disappeared, and from some unknown source returned with an armful of light, dry wood, which he stuffed into the stove and made a glorious blaze.

"How cold it is here!" exclaimed Etta Stewart as she came in. "Why is n't this room warmer?"

Bertha again explained.

"That 's pretty works!" she replied. "We can't have a meeting here."

"Yes, we can," John declared. "It is growing warmer every minute; we can draw the seats round the fire, and not go into the back part of the room."

With the boys' help he formed the seats in a semicircle round the red covered stand, which he placed before the stove, and the girls soon filled them. As soon as the fire was burning the two associate members who had made the first move seated themselves apart from the others, but Bertha beckoned them with a smile, and at last they came into a seat with her.



"Harry," she whispered, "Nan can't play because the organ keys are so cold, so you must start some of the hymns."

Harry nodded, and Bertha's heart filled with gratitude for this sister who was so ready to help in every way.

None of them ever forgot that meeting, or the brief, earnest prayers which followed Nan's first petition. Bertha, Harry, and Lucy for the first time, in a few heartfelt words, made an audible prayer, that God would bless their meeting; and in the pause which followed, while they still sat with bowed heads, Harry's clear, sweet voice started the hymn of which they all were so fond: —

"At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light,  
And the burden of my heart rolled away!"

At the close of the meeting John and Bertha shook hands with smiling eyes and lips. It was the way these young Christian Endeavorers expressed their feelings, and they knew by the silent pressure of the hand what the meeting had been to each other.



## CHAPTER XX.

## THE ENDEAVOR CONVENTION.

FROM that night the meetings improved, and during the winter the society enjoyed an especial season of help, an account of which reached Ella and Clifford, for their cousins kept them informed of everything relating to the Endeavor Society.

The middle of January the pastor of the large church in the adjoining town invited the neighboring societies to meet with them, and form a local union. It had been good sleighing, but the day before the convention met a heavy rainstorm took off all the snow, and left nothing but a sheet of ice.

“Do you think we will be able to go?” asked Bertha, as they gathered at the vestry in the evening.

“Don’t you say a word,” ordered Harry. “It has cleared off finely, and of course we are going.”



"But the traveling is dreadful," said Etta. "The roads are a sheet of ice."

"But it is only four miles," said Harry. "We can go; can't we, Mr. Murry?"

"Suppose we get stuck on bare ground?" suggested John.

"We would throw out the cargo," declared Harry. "You must say we can go, or else we'll start and walk."

"Of course we will," cried Nan. "Harry White, you and I will get there if we have to fly!"

The next day was clear and cold. The ice glittered like silver in the sunlight, as a large, three-seated sleigh, drawn by a span of black horses, with shining harness and arch of silver bells, dashed up the lane, and came to a stand before the Whites' door.

"Here are a couple of dummies," said Joe, as Harry and Bertha came out, all wrapped up in shawls. "Where are you going to put them, Mr. Murry?"

The horses shook their heads impatiently as John got down from the driver's seat, and Emma Baker screamed for Joe to stand at their heads, lest they should start to run.



"What a Mother Bunch you are, Harry!" she called out. "Don't you want another shawl?"

"You 'll freeze without any," Harry retorted. "Can we go on the front seat, Mr. Murry?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied. "Up with you."

"Take her up tenderly,  
Handle with care,  
Fashioned so slenderly,  
Young, and so fair!"

quoted Nan merrily, as Bertha and Harry, so wrapped up that they could hardly turn their heads, took their places with John on the front seat.

"It will be dreadful going down hill," said Etta Stewart. "I don't believe they will expect us, it's such bad traveling."

"I don't believe any of the other towns will have handsomer turnouts," said Harry with just pride in the handsome horses, who arched their graceful necks as they went slowly down the hill, guided by John's careful hand.

The four miles were quickly gone over, and the girls left the sleigh and went into the large roomy vestry underneath the church. They were the



first arrivals, and, though the room was warm, it was empty, except for one young man and a boy who did not know what to do with the bevy of girls who flocked in upon them. The boy retired bashfully to the window, and regarded them out of the corner of his eye; and, after placing chairs for them near the fire, the young man modestly stepped one side.

"Oh, dear," said Emma, as they took off their wraps, "just see how the wind has blown my hair about my ears!"

"You ought to have wrapped up more," said Harry triumphantly, "and then the wind could n't have got at your hair."

"I think I should feel better if I could look in a glass," remarked Nan.

With an amused smile the young man offered to find them one, and, following him through the vestry, they came to a church parlor and kitchen, where they gathered merrily round the looking-glass.

"How nice everything is!" said Bertha to Etta, as they stood one side, waiting for the younger girls to get through with the glass.

"They have got some life over here," Etta replied, "and try to do something."



“They have a larger and richer society than we have,” replied Bertha, “and of course can do more.”

“They don’t care over home whether the church looks decent or not,” declared Etta. “But I don’t think they have given us a very warm welcome.”

“I ’m sure the rooms are warm enough,” laughed Bertha.

“But why is n’t there some one here to receive us besides that fellow, who does n’t know what to do and is scared half out of his wits?”

“I don’t think he is very much scared,” replied Bertha. “Probably they did not expect us so soon; you know our time is always faster than theirs. Have you girls got through with the glass at last?”

“You can have it now,” said Emma graciously. “It is beauty before age to-day.”

“I don’t know as I dare look in,” said Bertha merrily. “Do I look very bad, girls?”

“Yes; you look dreadfully,” said Nan, at which the others laughed, for Bertha was one of those girls who are always in order, and she was looking very pretty that afternoon.

The others now began to arrive, and Mr. Smith



introduced his young people to his brother minister, Mr. Fenton, and his lovely young wife, with whom the girls fell in love at once.

"I 'm breaking the tenth commandment all to pieces," whispered Harry to Nan, "for I do envy these people their minister's wife."

"Yes," replied Nan; "and their vestry and church parlor too. I wish we had things as nice."

A young lady with a hymnbook in her hand sat down before the piano, and the convention was opened by singing. The afternoon was devoted to business, for a local union was regularly organized; and while they were counting the votes for the last time, Mr. Fenton left the president's chair, and, coming to where Bertha was sitting, said in a low tone, —

"We want one of your society to lead the praise service to-night, Miss White, and you have been recommended as the one to do it."

"I!" exclaimed Bertha with a little gasp.

"Yes," said the gentleman, smiling. "It will be twenty minutes long, and I will leave you to select the hymns."

"But," said Bertha hastily, "I think Mr. Murry had better lead; he is our president."



"I know," Mr. Fenton replied, "but it is a pleasant sight to see a young lady in the desk, so I hope that you will not disappoint us."

"But I have never led alone," said Bertha. "In our society we have two leaders."

"That is better still," said Mr. Fenton promptly. "Suppose you ask one of the young ladies to lead with you to-night;" and, taking her consent for granted, he bowed and turned away.

"You are in for it now, Bird," whispered Nan gleefully. "Was n't it nice of him to honor our society?"

"You would n't think so if he had asked you," Bertha replied. "Etta, you will lead with me, won't you?"

"Indeed I won't," that young lady declared. "I was n't recommended to him."

"He did n't think of but one," said Bertha eagerly, "and does n't know any of us."

"But Mr. Smith and John do," she replied. "They did n't recommend me, so I am not called upon to lead."

Bertha said no more; but she felt very uncomfortable, and wished she could excuse herself from the duty, but saw no way to do so, for Mr. Fenton



was busy counting votes, and she could not speak to him.

"Is n't she mean?" whispered Harry. "What of it if they did suggest you."

"Harry," said her sister, "you have got to lead with me to-night."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Harry in dismay, but Bertha silenced her with a "hush" as Mr Fenton rose to declare the vote.

At the close of the meeting the strangers were requested to step to the desk, where a card bearing the lady's name who would entertain them would be handed to each of them, and Harry went to get one for herself and Bertha, while her sister sat down in the corner to select the hymns for the evening praise service.

"What are you doing?" asked John, joining her.

"John Murry!" said she, looking up, "did you tell Mr. Fenton to ask me to lead the meeting to-night?"

"It's the first time I have heard that you were asked to lead," said John, smiling a little, for she had never greeted him in just that way before.

"Then it must have been Mr. Smith," said she.

"What makes you think it was any one?"



"Mr. Fenton does n't know me; besides, he said some one recommended me, so it must have been Mr. Smith."

"Here he comes now; you can ask him," said John, as the minister joined them with the inquiry:—

"Have you got a card, Bertha?"

"Harry has one for me," she replied. "We are going together."

"Have you a program? There is to be a praise meeting this evening; I don't know who will lead it, for Brother Fenton makes all the arrangements."

John gave Bertha a roguish glance as Mr. Smith adjusted his eyeglasses to read the rest of the program, and she felt vastly relieved to learn that neither John nor her pastor was guilty of recommending her to Mr. Fenton, and only wished that Etta had been there to hear what had been said on the subject.

"It's a deep mystery," said John as they left the vestry together. "You must have an admirer here, Bertha; I wonder who it is."

That evening the vestry filled rapidly; and, when they entered, Bertha and Harry lingered near the



large furnace to speak to Mr. Fenton, who was acting as usher.

"Don't you think," said the young man who had received them, "that the different societies ought to mix up more?"

"Yes," replied Harry; "we are so weak that we need each other's support."

"I had a letter from the Marshlands society," said the young man suddenly. "You are two of the young ladies who helped them to organize, I think."

"Yes," replied Bertha. "I was in hopes we should meet some of them here to-day."

"They are going to join the union, but it was impossible for them to come to-day, for their horses are all in the woods."

"Don't they do well to hold their meetings every Sunday evening?" said Harry. "We were afraid that they would n't be able to."

"Yes," he replied. "It is the first time any religious service has been held in Marshlands during the winter for years. These Endeavor Societies are grand things. They speak very warmly of you. They said in their letter that they could not have organized if you had not helped them."



"I am glad we have been able to help some one," said Bertha with a little smile.

Mr. Fenton joining them just then, the young man bowed and withdrew.

"I did not see you come in," said the minister. "It is time to commence the service, is n't it?"

As she took her place, Bertha found to her great surprise that she was not at all afraid, and really enjoyed the service of song, although she did have to lead it. At the close Mr. Fenton took his seat at the desk, and led the real Endeavor prayer meeting. Hearts were opened, and testimonies, prayers, and hymns followed each other in rapid succession.

It was a gathering which none of them ever forgot, and when, at last, it was time to close, all were sorry to part, and the refrain of the last hymn, —

God be with you till we meet again,

ascended like a prayer from hearts warm with Christian love.

At the close, strangers clasped hands like friends, and the girls were helped into their wraps by



those whose faces they had never seen until that afternoon.

At the door stood a beautiful old lady, who shook hands with each one as they went out, saying, —

“Good-by, dear girls ; God bless you.”

The sleighs were waiting at the door ; and, tucking his party carefully in with thick fur robes, John took up the reins and drove off.

“It is awfully cold,” said Harry, “but our hearts are so warm we sha’n’t feel it.”

The air was clear, cold, and still. In the deep blue vault of heaven the stars glittered and shone, while northern lights, in columns of red, green, and orange, shot up quivering into the sky. The bells rang out musically on the frosty air, and the sheet of ice which covered the earth gleamed with a pale white light under the stars.

Though John was a careful driver, the town with its twinkling lights was scarcely left behind them when the sleigh suddenly stopped, sending the girls forward with a scream.

“What has happened ?” they cried in chorus, as Joe and John both jumped out.

“We are stuck on a piece of bare ground,”



replied Joe. "Can't the horses start up, Mr. Murry?"

"It was very careless of me," said John, provoked with himself. "I made a note of this place coming over, and ought to have remembered."

"We will get out," said Bertha. "Then the horses can start the sleigh."

"Throw out the cargo," cried Joe. "Come, Nan! can't get her off with you aboard."

"I 'm tucked in so warm I can't bear to get out," said Nan, who was left alone in the sleigh. "My weight won't make any difference."

But, though the horses pulled with all their might they could not start the sleigh.

"You are not a feather, Nan," said Harry. "You have got to get out, or they can't start."

"Her shawls and things weigh a ton," declared Joe. "Come, Mother Bunch."

Joe pulled her out of the sleigh, for she was so wrapped up she could hardly move; and scarcely had her feet touched the ground, when the horses started with a leap, which took John so by surprise that at first he could hardly hold them.

They all set up a shout at Nan's expense, but she bore their jokes good-naturedly, declaring that



it was her wraps, not herself, that made the difference.

The effect of the convention was shown on the Lookout Committee more than on anything else. They had been doing very little, because they did not understand their duties; but the reports of the other societies taught them a good deal, and the week after the convention the chairman called a special meeting. It was all done very quietly, but the results were manifest. Certain associate members received calls from young ladies who had only been in the habit of noticing them with a bow. Bertha's plan was adopted, each active member taking the name of one associate, and making it the special subject of prayer. Though the results did not immediately follow, the meetings grew in spirit and power, and the members were drawn much nearer together.

One of the first associate members to become active was Joe. Had any noticed Nan's eyes when his name was proposed, they might have guessed whom she had been praying for.



## CHAPTER XXI.

*THREE YEARS AFTER.*

BERTHA had made the fire in the cook stove, set the teakettle on to boil, and sat down in the door, as she had done on a certain other June day three years before.

The scene before her had not changed, but Bertha herself looked fresher and fairer at the age of twenty-seven than she had when she was only twenty-four. The cool breeze stirred the wavy hair on her forehead, and her face was smiling and happy, for she was not sighing over the dreary round of housework, or wondering how she could make both ends meet.

A girl came up the dusty road, and, stepping over the stone wall, followed the well-worn path to the door.

It was Harry, tall, straight, and slender, a fly-away girl no longer, but a young lady whose black



curls were fastened up on top of her head in a most becoming fashion. She dropped on the step at her sister's feet and began to fan herself with her round sailor hat.

"How did the rehearsal go?" asked Bertha.

"Pretty well. John does harp at us so about speaking loud. He wants our essays delivered in a clarion voice."

"You know, Harry," said Bertha, "that it is very hard to speak so as to be heard all over a large church."

"Of course John is all right," said Harry impatiently. "But Nan really can not speak loud."

"He will make allowances for her," replied Bertha, "but there are some in the class who think it is genteel not to raise their voice, and I don't wonder John's patience is tried."

"I don't either," replied Harry; "Belle Parkman is so provoking. It is disagreeable to go to school to one's prospective brother-in-law."

"Why?" asked Bertha, smiling.

"Because all the girls expect me to mediate between them and John, and are always sending me to him with messages and requests, just because he is sort of one of the family."



John and Bertha had been engaged for two years, and would have been married, only that Bertha would not put the housekeeping on Harry's young shoulders until she was through school.

They had found, as Ella had said, that the Endeavor Society was a good place to make friends, for it had first brought them together.

"You will not be troubled that way much longer," said Bertha.

"No; I am glad my school days are nearly over, for then he can become a member of the family in earnest."

"Did you get the mail?" asked Bertha, who was as matter-of-fact as ever.

"Yes; but there was only a letter from Cliff and the paper: Joe took that."

"Did Cliff say anything about coming to the graduation?"

"Did n't mention it," said Harry with a slight curl of her lip. "He has forgotten that there is such a thing. His letter is full of class day, boat clubs, and baseball teams; he will never think of that promise he made so long ago."

"I 'm sorry," replied Bertha, "for I should like to see the dear fellow. I did n't think when he



went away that we should not meet again for three years."

"I am not surprised," said Harry, rising. "I did n't expect him to come down here again. I will go upstairs and sew on my dress until tea time."

The first thing she did on reaching her room was to toss the letter she had just received onto a pile of others, directed in the same bold hand, saying spitefully, as she closed the desk with a snap, —

"Nobody cares whether you come or not," and, seizing the billowy mass of lace and ribbon which lay on the bed, the young lady fell to hemming with all her might.

A day or two after, as she was swaying to and fro in the hammock, she espied a young man coming up the road.

At first she thought it was a stranger, but when he turned into the lane she recognized the tall, well-knit figure, and her heart beats sent the deep rose color to her cheeks.

The moment Clifford saw her, he took off his hat, saying gravely, "Would you like to buy any firearms to-day, ma'am?"



“Clifford Preston!” exclaimed Harry. “Did you drop out of the sky?”

“Do I look as though I had just come down?” he asked, glancing at his dusty boots. “I did n’t know as you would recognize me.”

“You have n’t changed a bit,” said Harry as they shook hands.

“But you have,” he declared frankly. “You have grown very pretty.”

“That is as much as to say that I was very homely three years ago,” said she, coloring under the glance of his dark eyes.

“It is too bad of you to twist my compliments round in that way,” said he. “Did n’t you expect me to-day?”

“Of course not,” she replied. “You did n’t say a word about coming in your letter.”

“But I told you three years ago, sitting on that very step, that I should be here.”

“But how did I know but you had forgotten all about it?”

“I see what kind of an opinion you have of me,” said Clifford in a hurt tone. “You will tell me that you are sorry I came, next.”

“Indeed I won’t,” she replied, “for I like to have people keep their promises.”



Here Bertha, attracted by the sound of voices, came running out, and gave the newcomer a warm welcome.

“How is Ella?” she asked. “Why did n’t you bring her with you?”

“That bald-headed tyrant absorbs her whole attention,” he replied, “and she does n’t care anything about the rest of the world.”

“How is the blessed baby?” asked Bertha eagerly. “Whom does he look like?”

“The family have n’t done anything but worship him since he arrived on the scene,” he replied. “They think he is the most wonderful child on the face of the earth, but I don’t see as he is any different from other babies. He squalls every time I go near him, and makes up dreadful faces at me.”

“You don’t deserve to have a nephew,” said Harry severely, “if that is the way you talk.”

“My nose is broken,” said he plaintively. “I have been the sole male representative of the family all these years, and the moment Ella presents them with this infant they neglect me, and bow down before that red-faced mite of humanity. Even Auntie Moore has basely deserted me, and



spends all her surplus cash on coral rattles and silver mugs."

"So you thought you would come where you would be appreciated," laughed Bertha.

"Exactly," he replied. "When are you going to invite me to the wedding, Bird?"

"Whose wedding, you impudent boy?" she asked, laughing and blushing.

"You ought to give me an especial bid," he continued, "for I knew what was going on three years ago, and wanted to tease awfully, but Ella would n't let me, for fear I'd frighten you."

"I never knew how much I owed Ella before," said Bertha merrily.

"You ought to ask me to be groomsman, at least. I'll ask you all to my wedding on the spot."

"Thank you," said Harry with a deep bow; "I accept with pleasure."

"You are such a precocious youngster," laughed Bertha, "I should n't be surprised to hear that you had the day all set."

"Hullo!" said a voice behind them; and, turning round, they saw Joe coming up the lane.

"How are you, Solon?" said Clifford, grasping



his cousin's hand. "I have kept my word, and come to hear you salute in Latin."

Joe was glad to see his cousin, and felt none of the jealousy toward the Harvard man that he had for the city boy, and they walked away, arm in arm, while Joe unfolded all his plans. His father had at last given his consent to his going West, where an uncle had promised to get him into business, and Joe was sure that his fortune was made.

After supper the young people went down to see Kezia, and found her sitting at her knitting in her little stuffed rocking-chair by the window.

"Why, Kezia, you look as natural as life!" exclaimed Clifford, nearly taking her breath away by the kiss he gave her.

"Bless my heart!" cried the lady, considerably taken aback by this attention from the handsome six footer. "Where in the land sakes did you come from?"

"I 'm right from my native heath," he replied, "and have come down here on purpose to see you and the other girls."

"That's just like your impudence," she declared. "You ain't changed an atom, if you do sport a mustache, and would plague a body's life out just



as quick as you would three years ago. How 's your sister, and that blessed baby?"

Clifford sat down in one of the stuffed rockers, and reeled off news as fast as his lively tongue would permit, to a most admiring audience, who regarded the young gentleman with his budget of news as a most entertaining addition to their society. Kezia felt very much flattered by his call, though she did not think it prudent to tell him so. When they rose to take their departure she asked them to come again. Clifford assured her he certainly should, for he considered her one of his best friends, and should never forget her lemon pies and cheese cakes, which statement sent the lady into the house to plan a tea party, at which she would regale the young gentleman with these dainties.

The first Monday evening of Clifford's visit was the monthly consecration meeting. Three years had made a great change, which was more apparent to Clifford than to those who had attended the meetings right along. The vestry was fuller, and, as the meeting opened, a seriousness prevailed, not manifested at the beginning. The active membership had not only increased, but the individual



members seemed more earnest and thoughtful; the responses to the roll call were given with more feeling than when, with a few exceptions, the members repeated a verse of Scripture. But the brief, earnest sentence prayers which came from all over the room showed where the spirit and power of the meeting lay; and, as he listened, Clifford thought his sister had indeed dropped seed into good ground when she organized that society of Christian Endeavor.

The grand event of the season was the graduation. As the twilight began to fall the church filled up so rapidly that ushers could hardly find seats for all. Everything was well arranged,—the lights brilliant, the decorations superb; and when an inspiring march pealed from the organ, the sweet girl graduates, with their male classmates, moved slowly up the aisle, and took their places amid a flutter of lace and ribbon, while programs rustled, fans waved, and admiring relatives beamed on them from the front seats.

The exercises quickly passed, and the boys and girls who had talked and thought of nothing else for weeks soon stood in a row receiving their diplomas.



Harry could not realize that it was over, but felt like one in a dream as she listened to the congratulations and compliments of her friends.

"How funny it seems," said she to Clifford, as they walked slowly towards home. "We have talked, thought, and dreamed of nothing but graduation all the spring, and it was over before we could draw our breath. I can't remember how I felt while reading my essay, and as for our clothes, that have cost us so much labor and expense, I don't believe any one knew that Belle had on white kid slippers, or that Nan's hairpins were silver, and Emma's gloves had ten buttons."

"We know you looked wonderfully pretty," said Clifford frankly, "and that is the main thing. But what are you going to do next?"

"You would think from the valedictory that we were all going to become something famous, but my career will be among the pots and kettles. I must be housekeeper, so that John and Bertha can marry."

"Are you going to be tied down here too?" asked Clifford.

A cloud rested on Harry's bright face, but she answered bravely, "I ought not to complain, after



such an example as Bertha has set me. Poor patient dear! she has waited long enough for her happiness to deserve it."

"Some one may want to carry you off some day. What will you do then?"

"Not much danger of that," laughed Harry, "for the boys are all going out West."

"Some of them may want you to go with them," he replied. "That red-hot Democrat, for instance."

"I never accept second invitations," said Harry demurely, "and I know he will ask Belle first."

"I say, Harry," said Clifford earnestly, "you would n't send a fellow off, if he should come, would you?"

"Depends upon the fellow."

"You know what I mean," said he, growing more and more earnest as he went on. "When I 'm through college I 'm coming again, and you 'll promise to listen to me then, won't you, Harry?"

"Yes, I 'll promise," said Harry; and as she never broke her word, it is to be presumed that when the time came she listened to whatever it was that Clifford had to say.























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